Painting Punks and Pansies:

Art as Affective Archive of Punk and Queer Subcultures in Postwar Kreuzberg

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Abstract

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This thesis will analyze neo-expressionist paintings made in Kreuzberg during the late 1970s and 1980s. The analysis will include Helmut Middendorf's "Electric Night" (1979), "Großstadt Eingeborene" (1979), "Big City Natives" (1980), and "The Singer" (1981), Rainer Fetting's "Van Gogh und Mauer V" (1978), "Grosse Dusche" (1980), "Figur an der Mauer" (1987), Salomé's *"Self-portrait"* (1981), "Verschärftes Aufsteigen" (1981), "Nackt in Gelb" (1981), Luciano Castelli's "Olé" (1981), and their joint work "Rote Liebe" (1979), as well as Bernd Zimmer's "Brennende Fabrik III" (1981), and "Verwandlung" (1983). Ultimately, I seek to demonstrate that these works offer insight into the obscured subcultural communities of postwar Kreuzberg.

My analysis of these artworks will draw on several methodologies, frameworks, and concepts. It will be heavily centered on affect theory, masculinity and queer theory, semiotics, fashion history, as well as the deep and complex entanglement of all of these notions. I will also draw from the anecdotal and oral histories provided to me by the artists themselves, artistic experts, and other individuals involved in Berlin's postwar artistic and subcultural scenes. Through these many avenues, I will unpack and analyze the aforementioned artworks in order to demonstrate how they present distinctive transgressive aesthetics that can be read as an affective archive of Kreuzberg's punk and queer subcultures of the late 1970s and 1980s.

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Introduction

In the 1970s and 1980s, Berlin was socially, politically, and culturally unstable. Its particularly tumultuous neighborhoods – such as Kreuzberg – became epicenters of affective aesthetic production as young artists (born and raised in this unstable and divided setting) turned to painting in order to depict their experiences of daily life. Amongst them were Luciano Castelli (b.1951), Rainer Fetting (b. 1949), Helmut Middendorf (b.1953), Salomé (b.1954), and Bernd Zimmer (b.1948), collectively known as the Moritzboys. Their individual and collective artistic practices drew from early twentieth-century expressionist painting techniques, using vivid colors and gestural brushwork to capture the reality of metropolitan life. Yet, they were largely excluded from the mainstream western art historical cannon; their works have rarely been collected, exhibited, or written about. However, these works deserve further recognition as they offer us insight into the complex, nuanced, and deeply obscured world of Berlin's postwar youth subcultures, specifically, its queer and punk scenes.

The Moritzboys came together in Berlin in the late 1970s.[1] Fetting, Middendorf, Salomé, and Zimmer first met at Berlin's Hochschule der Künste (HDK), where they all took painting classes. Together, in May 1977, they co-founded and ran the 'Self-help Galerie' located at Oranienstrasse 58 in Moritzplatz. This is where the group came to be known as the Moritzboys.[2] The gallery was located in the heart of Kreuzberg, with the Berlin Wall and the Heine Strasse checkpoint in direct view. Like many of Kreuzberg's buildings, Oranienstrasse 58 was abandoned by the city and had come to be occupied by squatters. Many of these squatters were punks and queers who ran community spaces in the same buildings (i.e., bars,

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[1] Fassbender, Guido, Jeppesen, Travis, Stahlhut, Heinz, and Simone Wiechers, *Rainer Fetting – Berlin*, Hirmer, Munich, 2011: 66.
[2] Ibid, 67-8.

punk clubs, grassroots organizations, etc.). The Moritzboys all lived in the direct vicinity of the gallery. Notably, Fetting and Salomé lived together as a couple in an apartment in the Oranienstrasse 58 building.[3] They were all active participants in the growing and interconnected queer and punk communities: Salomé and Fetting were active members of the locally based queer liberation group 'Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin' (HKW). The pair, along with Middendorf, also performed in punk bands. In 1980, Salomé started a punk band called 'Geile Tiere' with Luciano Castelli, who then joined the Gallery at Oranienstrasse 58.[4]

In the following decade, the Moritzboys sought to capture the reality of their experience living in this setting and participating in these subcultural communities. They wanted to "translate feeling" into their visual artworks.[5] Middendorf and Fetting focused their practices on capturing the generalized big picture of these subcultures while Salomé's and Castelli's practices focused on their own personal, individualized experiences of said subcultures. In the following pages, I demonstrate that, when read together, these artists' works serve as an affective archive of Kreuzberg's punk and queer subcultures in the 1970s and 1980s. My study includes a diverse selection of paintings by Helmut Middendorf, Rainer Fetting, Salomé, Luciano Castelli, and Bernd Zimmer made between 1979 and 1989. I begin my study by exploring the broad and generalized subcultural depictions that are presented in Middendorf's and Fetting's art works. I then engage with the more intimate and personal narratives presented by Salomé and Castelli. My text concludes with a survey of Zimmer's work, where I present the possibilities for future avenues of study pertaining to the Moritzboys. Ultimately, in this thesis, I demonstrate that the artworks made by the Moritzboys in the 1970s and 1980s fabricated a distinctive transgressive aesthetic of

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[3] Fassbender, et. al., *Rainer Fetting – Berlin*: 67.

[4] Stewart, Caroline, and Salomé, Circus Hostel - *Interview with Salomé,* Personal, July 15, 2023: 13:18.

[5] Fassbender, et. al., *Rainer Fetting – Berlin*: 68.

liminality while also serving as an affective archive of the entanglement of Kreuzberg's queer subculture and punk subcultures; specifically, I look at the overlap of these scenes.

I draw on several methodologies, frameworks, and concepts to support this claim. In addition to literary theoretical analysis, I will draw from on-site research conducted in Berlin in July 2023. This research included visits to galleries, archives, and other relevant establishments (nightclubs, etc). Of note, I visited Galerie Deschler, a small-scale gallery focused on collecting postmodern German paintings. Galerie Deschler has a substantial collection of works by the Moritzboys. I was given access to the gallery's private vaults, archives, documentations, as well as both published and unpublished curatorial texts pertaining to the Moritzboys. There, I discovered multiple artworks by the Moritzboys that I had not previously been able to find (i.e., that were not listed online, not available in international print publications, etc.).

While in Berlin, I conducted an oral history interview with Salomé. During this interview, he went over and analyzed a few of his artworks. He explained the rationale behind these works, the process that went into creating them, and pointed out many important symbols buried within their compositions. He spoke candidly and intricately about his experience as a queer man in postwar Kreuzberg which has helped me subsequently understand how he reflects and captures that experience in his art works. He discussed his fashion and art aesthetics, through which he sought to embody queerness and punkness in a manner that disrupted social conventions and upset publics. He also spoke about the Moritzboys' personal dynamics; he provided details about their relationships to each other and to their larger communities. Considering the lack of access to primary source material pertaining to these topics that I had encountered early in my research, this fieldwork proved to be immensely valuable. From a theoretical perspective, my study centers affect (specifically negative affect such as angst, aggression, anger, etc.), masculinity and

queerness, fashion and style, as well as the deep and complex entanglement of all of these

notions. Before we can undertake an analysis of the Moritzboys' artworks, we must first

understand the concepts, contexts, and theories which will guide and shape said analysis.

On Subculture

First and foremost, we must ask ourselves: What is a subculture? According to *The*

Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archeology, in its most basic form, a subculture can be defined

as: "A self-defining group within a society which holds different values and norms to those of

the majority. This may be represented by specialized types of material culture or the

differences in the way material culture is used."[6] This definition asserts that a subculture is

constructed by two main facets– values/norms and material culture – and that these facets are

different from those that govern mainstream conventional culture. This is a good starting

point, but let us further develop this definition. One of the most seminal in-depth explorations

of subculture was brought to us by semiotic theorist Dick Hebdige in 1979, with his book

Subculture: The Meaning of Style.[7] Through the lens of post-structuralism, marxism, and

semiotics, Hebdige further explores the two fundamental prongs that define a subculture:

ideology and aesthetics. Hebdige affirms that a subculture is a group unified by a set of

distinctive governing ideologies and values. Subculture cannot exist without mainstream

culture because it is, according to Hebdige, a refusal and subsequent reinvention of

conventional culture.[8] So while a subculture's governing ideologies diverge from the

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[6] Darvill, Timothy, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology*, Oxford
University Press, Oxford, 2009: 940.
[7] Stuart Hall – one of the founders and directors of the Center for Contemporary Cultural
Studies at the University of Birmingham – played a key role in foregrounding the concept of
subculture. Under Hall's supervision, scholars of the Birmingham school, such as Dick
Hebdige, worked to foreground the field of subcultural studies in the post WWII era. In his
book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style,* Dick Hebdige pulls influence from Hall and the
Birmingham school of thought to study UK's musical subcultures (specifically, its growing
punk scenes). My subcultural analysis will be grounded primarily in Hebdige's work.
[8] Hebdige, Dick, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Methun, London & New York, 1979: 3.

conventional and commonly held beliefs of mainstream society, they are also inextricably connected to broader social, cultural, and political landscapes.

In addition to having a distinct set of governing values and ideologies shared by all members, a subculture generally also has a distinct aesthetic style that is loaded with meaning. A subculture's aesthetic is constructed through material culture (i.e., clothing, hairstyles, makeup, objects, decor, etc.) which reflect the ideologies of the subculture while simultaneously serving as visual signifiers.[9] Importantly, subcultural aesthetics transcend fashion and often penetrate all forms of cultural production, such as music, performance, literature, cinema, design, etc.[10] However, subcultural aesthetics, in any form, are loaded with the distinctive visual signifiers that allow members of the subculture to recognize one another and, in turn, to be recognized as members of the subculture by those outside of it. This visual identification can be problematic, however. For example, in post-war East Berlin, being visibly punk and/or visibly queer meant asserting one's position within a non-state approved subculture, and therefore running the risk of being persecuted by authorities or 'law-abiding citizens' (Figure 1). Although it was not explicitly illegal to identify with these subcultures in West Berlin, those who did were often met with disapproval and prejudice on behalf of authorities and the general public. As such, these subcultures intentionally evaded official documentation and avoided being perceived by state-funded institutions (including academic and artistic institutions).

Despite research such as that of Hebdige, subcultures continue to be an obscured area of study. This is primarily because subcultures are often marked by an opacity.[11] By

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[9] Ibid, 114.

[10] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 107-9.

[11] In recent years, a number of subcultures - such as punk and queer - have been co-opted by the mainstream and commercialized. However, the original iterations of these subcultures are distinct from mainstream emulations. The core essence of a subculture is lost through the process of co-option, which only superficially appropriates certain elements. As such, the original subcultural group remains opaque since it cannot be made fully legible.

definition, subcultures are outcasted and rejected by the majority mainstream. Therefore, they

are generally neglected from conventional institutional study and excluded from most official

documentation and archiving. Importantly, some subcultural groups are more opaque than

others, and are therefore, are more often left out of scholarly discourse and mainstream

archival practices. These groups tend to be fundamentally in opposition with mainstream

politics, and are often legally prosecuted. Such is the case for Kreuzberg's postwar punks and

queers. As such, these groups were not just left out of mainstream cultural discourse, they

intentionally hid from it. They avoided being recorded, perceived, and understood since this

could have been dangerous for their existence and livelihood. They protected themselves

from prosecution by working to remain imperceptible and unintelligible. Opacity can be a

means for safety.[12]

On Punks and Queers in Kreuzberg

Punk first emerged in the UK around 1976.[13] With its nihilistic, anti-authoritarian, and

often anarchist ideologies, its loud, fast, simple, and aggressive music, as well as its trashy

cut-up DIY aesthetic, it heavily disrupted conventional Western culture.[14] In 1978, punk

made its way across the UK's borders into Berlin.[15] Punk's characteristics made it perfectly

suited to the angsty and repressed youths of Berlin; they wasted no time adopting punk and

transforming it into something distinctly German. In the late 1970s and 1980s, punk became

especially prevalent in Kreuzberg, a small, underfunded neighborhood in West Berlin that

was largely surrounded by the Berlin Wall (Figure 2). In Kreuzberg, the "rents were low,

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[12] Glissant, Edouard, "For Opacity", *Poetics of Relations,* translated by Betsy Wing, University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 1997: 194.
[13] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 23.
[14] Ibid, 26-28.
[15] Hayton, Jeff, and Andrew Lison,"'The Revolution Is Over and We Have Won!': Alfred Hilsberg, West German Punk, and the Sixties", *The Global Sixties in Sound and Vision: Media, Counterculture, Revolt*, edited by Timothy S. Brown, Pargrave Macmillan, New York, 2014: 136.

closing times liberal, the mood bad, and the search for pleasure gigantic".[16] This neighborhood came to house a distinct "hostile young population [...] consisting of drop-outs, freaks, anarchists, and conscientious objectors".[17] As such, it was the perfect breeding ground for a fast, angry, trashy, erotic, pill-fueled, dystopian, and anti-authoritarian punk subculture.[18] In the late 1970s, the youths of Kreuzberg that had begun adopting punk aesthetics and ideologies came together and built a community. They fashioned Kreuzberg's abandoned buildings, neglected and left to rot, into communal living spaces where punks could gather, discuss, put on shows, and create, away from the scrutiny of German authorities.[19] Further, around this same time, Kreuzberg came to house a large population of queer activists.[20] Once Kreuzberg's punks and queers began to occupy the same physical spaces, these subcultural communities became entangled.

These communities' connection seems natural since the tendencies of punk caused the subculture to reject conventional heteronormative behaviors. As Hebdige explains, within many punk communities, "overt displays of heterosexual interest were generally regarded with contempt and suspicion (who let the BOF [boring old fart]/Wimp in?)".[21] While straying from conventional heteronormativity, punk, full of complex contradictions, simultaneously maintained an air of machismo and aggressive, hyper-masculinity.[22] Of note, the far-left 'hard-mod' punk style which later evolved into the 'skinhead' punk style, was deeply rooted in traits of working-class masculinity such as machismo, toughness, ruggedness, aggression,

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[16] Matt, Gerald, and Thomas Miessgang, editors, *Punk: No One Is Innocent: Art, Style, Revolt*,
Verlag für Moderne Kunst, Vienna, 2008: 25.
[17] Ibid, 154.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Weh, Mathilde, editor, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*,
Hatje/Cantz, Berlin, 2015: 6.
[20] Gerald and Miessgang, *Punk: No One Is Innocent: Art, Style, Revolt*: 155.
[21] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 108.
[22] Gerald and Miessgang, *Punk: No One Is Innocent: Art, Style, Revolt*: 10-12.

etc.[23] These traits can also be associated with far-right fascist ideologies which are rooted in hyper-masculine toughness, machismo, hardness, and violence. Interestingly, the skinhead subculture draws from far-right fascist aesthetics, specifically through its incorporation of fascist-style clothing (such as heavy leather, lace-up work boots, chains, denim, and shaved-hair). Despite this, few iterations of skinhead punk subcultures actually align with fascist political and social ideologies.[24] Strangely, in the 1980s, skinhead aesthetics also became more commonly co-opted by queer men.[25] These queer men meshed elements of fascist, punk, and queer styles, creating a highly subversive and transgressive aesthetic that undermined fascism's hyper-heterosexual and homophobic doctrine through postmodern parody. So, while punk certainly fostered a queer scene, its queer scene was incredibly complex, contentious, and largely masculine. It is important to note that, due to Berlin's postwar cultural landscape, Keuzberg's punk and queer scenes were particularly lacking in racial and gender diversity; they were dominated by white men.

On Affect and Masculinity

One element that successfully unifies these conflicting forces (punk, queer, non-heteronormativity and hyper-masculinity) is their affective nature. What do I mean by this? Before we can understand how affect entangles all of these opposing forces, we must understand what is 'affect'. Affect is a non-discursive, visceral, physical, and in-body sensation experienced in response to something: for example, the feeling of a red-hot, blood curling, blinding rage.[26] However, linguistic descriptions are limited in their ability to truly convey and capture affect since its visceral nature causes it to be "hard-to-pin-down" and

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[23] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 55-56.
[24] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 116.
[25] Cole, Shaun, *'Don We Now Our Gay Apparel': Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford Press, New York, 2000: 171.
[26] Resser, Todd, "Approaching Affective Masculinities", *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity,* Routledge, New York, 2020: 103-5.

"difficult to articulate".[27] Language is only really capable of conveying culturally coded emotion. Emotions such as anger are an effort to contain affective experience within language and are our imperfect attempt to put intangible visceral, in-body, affective experiences into words.[28] Otherwise put, an individual can say "I am angry.", but this sentence only transmits a culturally-coded collective understanding of anger; it does not truly capture the complex, visceral nature of the experience that the individual is feeling. The attempt to dominate an intangible visceral experience by verbally naming it as an emotion is particularly common practice for heteronormative men.[29]

In her chapter "Introduction: Affective Intensities and Brutal Belonging", cultural scholar Rosemary Overell unpacks the shared affective experiences of musical subcultures. Overell explores the way musical subcultures (such as hardcore, grindcore, or even punk) create a shared intensive affective experience for members, specifically when attending subcultural gatherings like group events or concerts.[30] As Overell asserts, these shared affective experiences are intangible, ephemeral, and difficult to experience outside of the specific subcultural settings that fostered them.[31] So, if subcultures do take on distinctive affective atmospheres, we must ask ourselves: what affective atmosphere marked the intersecting punk and queer subcultures in postwar Kreuzberg?

The feelings that can be used to characterize these subcultures' affective atmospheres are intensity, high-energy, eroticism, aggression, anger, upset, and angst. In his chapter "Anger and the Struggle for Justice," political theorist Simon Thompson explores the significance of the aforementioned negative emotions in broader political, social, and cultural

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[27] Ibid, 105.
[28] Resser, "Approaching Affective Masculinities": 103-5.
[29] Ibid, 105.
[30] Overell, Rosemary, "Introduction: Affective Intensities and Brutal Belonging", *Affective Intensities in Extreme Music Scenes: Cases from Australia to Japan*, palgrave Macmillan, UK, 2014: 13.
[31] Overell, "Introduction: Affective Intensities and Brutal Belonging": 1 & 12.

contexts. He argues that these emotions "can be both a source of knowledge and a source of motivation" and, therefore "perform both an epistemic and a mobilizing function in collective action".[32] This suggests that the specific affective atmospheres that characterized Kreuzberg's punk and queer subcultures likely had large-scale political and social impacts. This notion is further supported by historian Jeff Hayton's text "Crosstown Traffic: Punk Rock, Space and the Porosity of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s", in which he claims that the nature of the prevalent punk subculture in Berlin "helped contribute to destabilizing SED [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, a.k.a. Socialist Unity Party] authority".[33]

Moreover, emotions such as aggression, anger, upset, and angst are often culturally coded as masculine and therefore complexly linked to masculinity and the experience of manhood. In his essay "Eros and the Male Spirit", Thomas Moore reflects on the way in which sexuality and eroticism are deeply embedded in the construction of masculine identity and therefore often become entangled with feelings of anger, upset, angst, and aggression.[34] This entanglement is complex and buried within the physical experience of manhood, making it hard to pin down or to put into words. The complexity, intangibility, and physicality of affect gives it the potential to challenge and disrupt "normative or hegemonic masculinity because it reveals that a male body is not in full control".[35] As a result, affect is loaded with "queer potential" and has the capacity to "queer normative masculinity".[36]

Instead of trying to dominate and control affect through culturally-coded language, the Moritzboys embrace its inexplicability and attempt to render a more honest depiction of

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[32] Thompson, Simon, "Anger and the Struggle for Justice", *Emotion, Politics and Society*, edited by Simon Clarke and Paul Hoggett, Palgrave Macmillan, London, UK, 2006: 125).
[33] Hayton, Jeff, "Crosstown Traffic: Punk Rock, Space and the Porosity of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s", *Contemporary European History*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2017: 345.
[34] Thompson, Keith, editor, *To Be a Man: In Search of the Deep Masculine*, J.P. Tarcher, New
York, 1991: 30-34.
[35] Resser, "Approaching Affective Masculinities": 104.
[36] Ibid, 106.

affective experiences through visual aesthetics. In "The Ethicoaesthetics of Affect and the

Bloc of Sensations Reaffirming the Specificity of Art (Against Representation)", art theorist

Simon O'Sullivan argues that visual art allows us to engage with the typically invisible,

imperceptible, and intensely visceral realm of affective sensations that is rooted outside of

our consciousness.[37] O'Sullivan claims that through visual art, artists can capture and

"mak[e] visible otherwise imperceptible [affective] forces" and thus share them with

audiences.[38] O'Sullivan continues to explain that this is especially possible with semi-abstract

figural painting such as neo-expressionism – the Moritzboys' formal aesthetic of choice.[39] As

such, the Moritzboys, through their semi-representational painting practices, managed to

create a distinctive and complex affective archive of Kreuzberg's interconnected punk and

queer subcultures.

Whereas Middendorf and Fetting focus largely on the generalized big-picture

renditions of these subcultures, Salomé and Castelli focus primarily on their personal

subjective experiences within these subcultures. Zimmer, in his practice, oscillates between

the intimate and the general, blending these two realms of experience into one. Each artist has

a distinctive formal style, yet they all share undeniable resemblances. In the following pages,

my analysis will start with the generalized depictions of subcultural life, as seen in

Middendorf's and Fetting's works. Then, I will explore the individualized experience of these

subcultures as portrayed in Salomé's and Castelli's works. Finally, I will explore Zimmer's

work as I consider the ways in which this study could be further developed. Analyzing the

artworks in this way will help shed light on the multi-faceted and diverse nature of the

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[37] O'Sullivan, Simon, "The Ethicoaesthetics of Affect and the Bloc of Sensations Reaffirming
the Specificity of Art (Against Representation)", *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari*,
Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2006: 44 & 52.
[38] Ibid, 50.
[39] Ibid, 52.

Moritzboys' transgressive aesthetic affective archive of punk and queer subcultures in postwar Kreuzberg.

Helmut Middendorf

There is no artist who more vehemently and feverishly sought to depict Kreuzberg's punk scene than Helmut Middendorf. His subject matter was primarily the interiors of punk venues and he let punk fundamentals and methods – such as angst, aggression, and intensity – guide his artistic practice.[40] Middendorf's works go beyond capturing images of the punk scene, they capture its feeling and atmosphere. Through his works, we can begin to understand what it felt like to be there, in the middle of it all. Such is the case with his large scale (200 x 300cm) painting titled *Electric Night* (1979) (Figure 3). At first glance, this work depicts the inside of a punk nightclub on the night of a concert. Through its various formal elements, this work fully immerses us into the affective atmosphere of the scene. Even the work's title evokes the intensity of nightlife and music venues. As is the case for most works discussed in this study, *Electric Night* is "intensely, if not intrusively physical, conceived so that the viewer [is] immersed in the experience [Middendorf is] trying to convey".[41]

The work's incredibly large and imposing scale confronts its viewers. The figures are almost life-sized. It is as though these two canvases are a portal directly into the scene at hand. When observing this work, you are fully immersed into the crowded composition – you are thrown into the chaos of the moment. The sense of intensity and angst surrounding this scene is heightened by Middendorf's aggressive, gestural, and jagged brushstrokes. The

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[40] Kalb, Peter R., "Back to the Easel: Neo-Expressionism and the Return of Painting," *Art Since 1980: Charting the Contemporary*, edited by Sarah Touborg, Pearson, London, 2013: 85.
[41] Brenson, Michael, "Art View: Human Figure is Back in Unlikely Guises", *New York Times*, January 13, 1985: 29.

figures are violently throwing themselves in every direction – as though they are in a mosh pit of sorts – and the brushstrokes are doing the same. It feels as though Middendorf's body was moving like the figures' when he laid down the brushstrokes in this work. The sense of intensity and chaos is once again heightened by the vivid red color that dominates the composition. Red is generally associated with feelings of intensity, aggression, and anger; the incorporeal visceral experience associated with intense anger is often characterized as feeling 'red-hot' with rage.[42] Kreuzberg's punks were filled with such rage; they were angry at their government, angry at society, and angry at the world.[43] So, when they gathered in large groups at concerts, there was often a powerfully angry affective atmosphere. Performers and audiences alike would scream, throw things, and aggressively thrash around.[44] The dominant red coloring of *Electric Night* works to capture this affective atmosphere by alluding to the punk's communal affective experience of red-hot rage.

The vibrant red is paired with various shades of blue, creating a visually stimulating color scheme. While intensely vibrant colors can be associated with the electrifying design elements found inside of nightclubs (ex: strobe lights, neon signage, etc.), the vivid blue color specifically evokes the flashing blue lights of a police car. This is a relevant reading considering how heavily persecuted punks were in postwar Berlin. The explicitly anti-authoritarian and anti-establishment attitudes that informed punk subculture were thought of as volatile and dangerous by German state institutions, and subsequently were heavily policed.[45] While Kreuzberg was located on the western side of the Berlin Wall – free from authoritarian state laws and the Stasi Police – its high poverty rates and close proximity to a

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[42] Resser, "Approaching Affective Masculinities": 104.

[43] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 11.

[44] Such behavior is observable in most concert footage, including footage of 'Geile Tiere' concerts as captured on video by Knut Hoffmeister in *Hoffmeister Versucht Antworten zu Finden!* (1979-1995) and *Geile Tiere im Dschungel* (1980).

[45] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 19.

major crossing point caused it to be seen as an especially volatile neighborhood by German

police and other governmental authorities.[46] It indeed became a major hub for illegal

exchange between the western and eastern blocs.[47] Punks would risk crossing over the Berlin

Wall in order to attend events, as well as to simply gather and engage with other members of

the punk community.[48] So, in addition to experiencing their own prosecution, Kreuzberg's

punks would have heard eastern punks' stories of excessive and violent policing from

authorities in the eastern bloc.[49] As such, unpleasant and violent encounters with police

became a key concern for German punks. In many of his works, Middendorf engages with

this issue through the lens of ambiguity.[50] In addition to being flooded with ambiguous red

and blue lighting, the majority of Middendorf's figures in *Electric Night* are masked. The

only clearly unmasked figure is located at the center of the composition, with its hands in the

air. I cannot help but question the true nature of this scene: is the unmasked figure simply

dancing in a vividly-lit nightclub, surrounded by other punks who are all dressed in black?

Or, is this figure in the process of being detained, raising its hands as the masked police force

raid the nightclub? It is hard to tell. Middendorf leaves us in a state of unresolved uncertainty,

mirroring the uncertainty felt everyday by punks living in postwar Kreuzberg. As viewers, we

are encouraged to experience their anxiety and the chaos born out of not knowing.

Masked figures are also observable in Middendorf's *Großstadt Eingeborene (Big City*

Natives) (1979) (Figure 4). Like *Electric Night*, this work depicts a punk venue on the night

of a concert. In the foreground, several masked figures are thrashing around. They are bathed

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[46] Hayton, "Crosstown Traffic: Punk Rock, Space and the Porosity of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s": 377.

[47] Eisman, April A.,"East German Art and the Permeability of the Berlin Wall", *German Studies Review*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2015: 604.

[48] Hayton, "Crosstown Traffic: Punk Rock, Space and the Porosity of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s": 356.

[49] Mohr, Tim, *Burning Down the Haus*, Algonquin Paperbacks, North Carolina, 2018: 53.

[50] Gerald and Miessgang, *Punk: No One Is Innocent: Art, Style, Revolt*: 12.

in darkness and are posed mid-movement. They do not have distinctive features suggesting that their individuality and personal identities are irrelevant. Rather, we are encouraged to pay attention to their collective energy and presence. In the background – specifically, in the upper right side – three figures are playing instruments. Two guitarists are facing each other and the silhouette of a drummer is visible in-between them. These figures' poses suggest that they are actively performing music. They are also brightly illuminated in white-ish yellow which is reminiscent of the glow of a spot-light. These elements all suggest that a musical performance is actively happening. Therefore, unlike with *Electric Night*, we can be certain that this work is depicting a concert and not a raid; the masked figures shown here are punks, not police. However, the figures' movements are arguably ambiguous. Their poses are unclear. On one hand, they look like they are fist-fighting, and on the other hand, they look like they are 'slam dancing' or 'pogo-ing'.[51] [52] This interchangeability between dance styles and the act of fighting warrants further scrutiny. Notably, these are all aggressive physical actions which border on violence. Slam dancing and pogo-ing so closely resemble fighting because they are meant to serve as a physical expression of punks' aggression and angst. At concerts, groups would form mosh pits in which these dance styles would be practiced. Slam dancing and pogo-ing were staples of Kreuzberg's punk concerts.[53] Here, Middendorf depicts them through formal methods that embody their affective nature. Like these dance moves, his brushstrokes are "agitated [and] feeling-laden".[54] Like the mosh-pits, his composition is crowded and chaotic. His use of vivid colors and dramatic contrasts create a sense of

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[51]'Slam dancing' and 'pogo-ing' are punk dances in which participants bounce around and slam their bodies into each other.

[52] Gerald and Miessgang, *Punk: No One Is Innocent: Art, Style, Revolt*: 162.

[53] Ibid.

[54]Arnason, H.H., and Elizabeth C. Mansfield, "Painting Through History", *History of Modern Art*, Pearson, London, 2013: 667.

intensity. All of these elements come together on the large-scale canvas (155 x 190 cm),

confronting viewers with the scene and immersing them into its affective atmosphere.

A year after creating *Großstadt Eingeborene,* Middendorf made another work titled

Big City Natives (1980) (Figure 5). This diptych appears to be yet another rendering of the

scene depicted in *Großstadt Eingeborene*. Both works share a similar color palette and

feature the same masked figures and trio of musicians. The primary difference between the

two works is the viewer's position. In *Big City Natives*, the viewer is at the back center of the

club, with the stage directly in front; the two guitarists and the drummer are located in the

top-center of the work, split down the middle by the canvas line. The fact that Middendorf

created multiple works depicting this same scene – each from different angles and

perspective – suggests an urge to truly and wholly capture this scene as a subject. This also

hints to an archival impulse. Importantly, what Middendorf seems to be archiving here is the

affective atmosphere of this scene. Like in *Großstadt Eingeborene*, the figures are

anonymous, suggesting that their individualized identities do not really matter. It is also not

clear where this scene is located since there are few distinctive visual markers. It is likely that

this could be the inside of SO36, a famous punk bar in Kreuzberg which the Moritzboys often

frequented.[55] Middendorf described the inside of SO36 as "bare, hard, and direct".[56] Yet, it

could just as well be any of the other punk clubs or building basements where the kinds of

shows depicted in this work took place. This vagueness and lack of detail is important to the

art historical analysis of this work. It is not the specific attributes of the scene that matter, it is

the overall feeling of it that matters. In *Big City Natives*, Middendorf creates a crowded

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[55]SO36 is a longstanding punk music venue located in central Kreuzberg. In the late 1970s, the venue was run by Martin Kippenberger, another neo-expressionist artist who ran in the same circles as the Moritzboys. However, according to Salomé, the Moritzboys avoided this venue in the late 1980s, after Kippenberger had displayed homophobic attitudes.
[56] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 110.

chaotic composition with gestural and jagged brushwork, vivid colors, as well as severe lighting and contrasts on a large scale (190 x 270 cm). Through these formal elements, he confronts viewers with the aggression, chaos, and physical intensity of punk.

Beyond capturing and conveying the affective atmosphere of punk shows in Kreuzberg, *Big City Natives* is loaded with symbols and meanings. Of note, the two guitarists' figures may symbolize connection between eastern and western German punks. Each guitarist is placed on the top of each canvas in this diptych. They are facing each other and the tips of their guitars are touching at the centerpoint, where the two canvases meet. The yellow lines emanating in opposite directions from each of these guitarists, I suggest, represent the Berlin Wall. The guitarists stand unified in the center, where the two sides of the wall meet. This alludes to the countless community connections created by punks' illegal crossings between the eastern and western blocs. Importantly, as Hayton states, "these interactions [between eastern and western punks] denied official [State] claims that punk was the result of capitalist decadence while undermining the East German government's efforts at cultivating a distinctive socialist identity".[57] Subsequently, punk "helped contribute to destabilizing SED [Socialist Unity Party] authority, which, in the end, would bring down the Berlin Wall".[58] Interestingly, the title of Middendorf's work – *Big City Natives* – refers to Berlin as one big city. It omits any acknowledgement of its division. As such, it reflects the anti-divisionist attitudes held by young German punks. Therefore, this work embodies not just the affective atmosphere of punk in Kreuzberg, but its attitudes and ideologies as well. *Big City Natives* serves an archival purpose, offering viewers insight into Kreuzberg's postwar punk subculture.

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[57]Hayton, "Crosstown Traffic: Punk Rock, Space and the Porosity of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s": 353

[58] Ibid, 354.

Middendorf's *The Singer* (1981) plays a similarly archival role by once again offering

affective insight into the world of German punk (Figure 6). This work is one of many

belonging to Middendorf's extensive *Drummer und Gitarrist (Drummer and Guitarist)* series

in which he sought to capture the immediacy and intensity of punk performances.[59] The

prolific nature of this series once again shows Middendorf's will to completely and

comprehensively capture the punk scene; that is to say, it demonstrates his archival impulse.

In *The Singer* (175 x 220 cm), we see a punk performer, bent over with his legs spread,

grasping a microphone stand that appears to be falling over. In the background, other

instruments and music equipment are roughly outlined, giving the impression that this figure

is on a stage, likely-mid performance. When looking at this work, we can feel the intensity of

this figure's performance. The brushstrokes are jagged, and highly gestural, creating a heavy

sense of movement throughout the work. Notably, the figure's hands and the bottom of the

microphone stand have multiple overlapping outlines, a visual strategy which gives the

illusion of movement. This brushwork is paired with vivid, red, yellow, and blue coloring.

While there are few white, black, and green-ish accents incorporated to create a heightened

contrast and dramatic lighting, the composition is largely dominated by the three primary

colors. This coloring mirrors the simplicity of punk songs' compositions. Further, the frantic

brushwork and chaotic lines imitates the auditory nature of classic hardcore punk music.

Overall, this work visually translates the chaotic, energetic, aggressive, yet simple auditory

experience of punk music, allowing viewers to affectively experience it.[60]

When I first laid eyes on this work, I was immediately reminded of the *London*

Calling album cover by The Clash (1980), arguably one of the most historically influential

punk bands (Figure 7). This album cover shows the band's bassist, Paul Simonon, smashing

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[59] Fassbender, et. al., *Rainer Fetting – Berlin*: 92.
[60] Kalb,"Back to the Easel: Neo-Expressionism and the Return of Painting": 85.

his guitar during a performance. This was allegedly done as an angry outburst against the venue authorities who were policing and trying to tame the band's audience.[61] When Simonon's image is placed next to *The Singer*, the resemblance becomes undeniable (Figure 8). Both images have the same composition structure and are framed and cropped almost identically. Middendorf's figure is in the exact same pose as Simonon, and both figures are slightly blurred because of the fact that they are in movement. The main difference between the two images is that Simonon is gripping a bass guitar while Middendorf's figure is gripping a microphone stand.

Importantly, The Clash played a large concert in west Germany in 1980 during which they performed songs from their most recently released album, *London Calling*.[62] So, it is likely that, around this time, Middendorf and the other punks in Kreuzberg drew influence from The Clash's music, art, and attitudes. By appropriating Simonon's iconic image and rendering it through affectively charged formal elements, Middendorf highlights this as an influential piece of the punk subculture through his specific lens of experience. He takes widely recognizable punk imagery and transforms it into something distinctly German.[63] Rather than trying to accurately recreate this iconic piece of subcultural iconography, Middendorf depicts it in a way that emphasizes his affective experience of it. In sum, his works engage with his punk subculture's most relevant issues and concerns while simultaneously embodying its communal affective atmosphere.

Rainer Fetting

Much like Middendorf, Rainer Fetting sought to capture the generalized affective atmosphere of Kreuzberg's subcultures in his works. While Middendorf's practice is

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[61] Walthall, Catherine, "The Story behind the Famous "London Calling" Album Cover by the Clash", American Songwriter, 12 June 2022.

[62] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 140-141.

[63] Mohr, *Burning Down the Haus*: 40.

primarily centered around the affective atmosphere of Krezuberg's punk community, Fetting's practice also brings focus to the affective atmosphere of Kreuzberg's queer community. Moreso, Fetting's works clearly depict the entanglement of these two subcultural communities. Despite this distinction, there are many similarities between these two artists' practices. The resemblance is perhaps most noticeable in Fetting's *Grosse Dusche* (1980) (Figure 9). Much like Middendorf's works, *Grosse Duche* (*Big Shower)* is large-scale (271 x 300 cm) work that does not depict a specific location. The background is primarily made up of blue and white brushstrokes. There are a few black lines that might suggest the outline of a physical structure, but this work is otherwise devoid of distinctive landscape markers. As a result, viewers are encouraged to focus on the figures and the overall atmosphere of the scene. The figures in this work are in dynamic positions. Their nude male bodies are twisted dramatically and theatrically. Their flamboyant poses evoke problematically wide-spread historical understandings of the queer male as effeminate and ostentatious (i.e., as a dandy or a pansy). This physical presentation goes against the heteronormative gender performance that is expected of men. Further, these figures seem to be checking each other out. The front figure on the far right side of the composition is turned to face the figure in the center left of the composition – the only one whose face is partially visible. This figure is then, in turn, peering over at the body of the figure on the far left side of the composition. The center right figure's body language is sensual yet somewhat sad. He has an expression of wistful longing. His gaze evokes an affective undertone of chastened desire which re-enforces the sense of melancholia that surrounds him. The feeling of melancholia is strengthened by the muted blue color scheme that dominates this work. While it evokes the wetness associated with the setting of a shower (per the work's title), it also embodies the notion of 'feeling blue'.[64] The

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[64] "Feeling blue" is a culturally-coded expression aimed at conveying the often intangible and inexplicable feelings of sadness, lowness, etc.

melancholic longing that permeates this work reflects the experience of repression and censorship felt by many queer individuals living in conservative spaces, such as postwar Germany.[65]

Moreover, while the landscape is ambiguous, the work's title suggests that this scene is set in a large shared shower. This setting is loaded with meaning. Historically, bathrooms and bathhouses have served as safe spaces of encounter for queer men.[66] However, during the Second World War, large gas showers were used in Nazi concentration camps to commit mass executions. Amongst the demographics targeted by the Third Reich were queer individuals. So, the ambiguous nature of this shower scene creates a complex ambivalence, leaving room for many interpretations.[67] This work alludes to the historical and ongoing prosecution of queer men in Germany just as much as it alludes to the perseverance of queerness. This work can be read one way or the other, and both ways simultaneously. This creates a complicated sense of ambiguity similar to the one that is observable in Middendorf's works. As previously discussed, this ambiguity and illegibility is characteristic of persecuted subcultures; punk and queer communities often protected themselves by remaining opaque and impenetrable. *Grosse Duche* embodies this illegibility.

Fetting often plays with historical references in his work. For example, in *Van Gogh und Mauer V (Van Gogh and the Wall V)* (1978), Fetting investigates the canon of art history by introducing the figure of Van Gogh (Figure 10).[68] In postwar Berlin,"the relationship of

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[65] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé:* 13:18.

[66] See for example: Potvin, John, "A Bathroom of One's Own: Hygiene, Sexuality and Creative Communities beyond the Public/Private Divide, c. 1880-1940", *Queering the Interior,* Bloomsbury Publishing, London and New York, 2017: 161-71.

[67] Kruizinga, Gerdine, "Nieuwe Wilden: Fierce Brushstrokes, Large Works and Intense Subject Matter." *KUNST.*, October 4, 2022.

[68] While Vincent Van Gogh was a prototypical outsider, his identity and art have undeniably been accepted into the mainstream modernist art historical cannon. He has become one of the most revered mainstream modernist artists and he is internationally recognizable to publics and critics alike. He is a pillar of the western Artistic Institution and its cannon.

painting to history […] attracted many artists who felt that the political events of the late twentieth century warranted scrutiny through a historically conscious aesthetic lens".[69] Such is the case for Fetting who, with works such as *Van Gogh und Mauer V*, calls into question mainstream art institutions, artistic conventions, and artistic hierarchies. In this large-scale work (201 x 251 cm), we see a mis-proportioned figure who is spray painting on the Berlin Wall. The formal elements of *Van Gogh und Mauer V* are steeped in "the outward aggression of the punk movement".[70] The jagged lines, highly gestural and agitated brushstrokes, vivid colors, and stark contrasts embody the chaotic, aggressive, and intensive affective atmosphere of punk in postwar Kreuzberg. A further connection to punk is created through this work's subject. Spray-painting was deeply interconnected to the punk scene in Berlin, on both the east and the west sides of the wall. This medium was accessible, enabling punks to partake in acts of dissent and civil disobedience. Punks often vandalized buildings with spray-painted anti-authoritarian slogans such as "Overthrow the Police State".[71] Through graffiti, punks were able to vandalize state property which affirmed their disobedience towards authorities and state regimes while also voicing their feelings and disseminating information in a public manner. With *Van Gogh und Mauer V,* Fetting illustrates graffiti's prominence within Kreuzberg's punk subculture. Thus this work's subject matter offers us insight into the subculture's methods, while simultaneously conveying the subculture's affective atmosphere through its formal elements.

Further, based on the title of this work, we are lead to assume that the figure is none other than the historically renowned and institutionally celebrated Vincent Van Gogh. By depicting one of the western world's most historically celebrated painters participating in the act of graffiti, Fetting complicates the moral implications of painting. He creates a

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[69] Arnason and Mansfield, "Painting Through History": 666.
[70] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 113.
[71] Mohr, *Burning Down the Haus*: 60.

contentious connection between easel painting, which has been perceived in canonical art history as a traditional and respectable medium, and spray-painting walls, which has been perceived as an act of vandalism. Fetting calls into question the canonical respectability of easel painting while also elevating the medium of street art and graffiti. When studying the formal elements of this work, it becomes evident that Fetting approaches the act of easel painting with the same veracity and agitation that one would expect from a work of spray-painted graffiti. As such, not only does this work – through its formal elements – embody the intensive and aggressive affective atmosphere of punk, but also embodies – through its content– the contentious attitudes of Kreuzberg's punks.

Van Gogh und Mauer V is just one of the many works from Fetting's *Figur und Mauer* series. This long spanning and prolific series depicts various figures in front of the Berlin Wall. While *Van Gogh und Mauer V* deals directly with punk, many of the other works from Fetting's series deal directly with queerness. Such is the case for *Figur an Der Mauer (Figure and the Wall)* (1987) (Figure 11). In this work, Fetting once again embodies the aggressive and chaotic affective atmosphere of punk through his use of formal elements: jagged lines, aggressive brushwork, intensive coloring, etc. He uses these elements to depict a non-heteronormative male figure, posing in front of the Berlin Wall. The figure's features are incredibly exaggerated, bordering on the grotesque, and his pose is theatrical and strangely contorted. On one hand, his pose highlights conventionally eroticized feminine attributes – such as big lips and voluptuous backside – and on the other hand, it is reminiscent of a bodybuilder's finishing pose, showing off a hyper-masculine muscular physique. Through his rendering of this figure, Fetting "presents a homosexual eroticism [by] combining a muscular body with a suggestively made-up face".[72] This figure has disproportionately large facial features and is posed so that his face is turned towards the viewer, making direct eye contact.

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[72] Kruppert, Rebecca, "Rainer Fetting", *Berlinischegalerie.*

As this figure meets our gaze, he firmly asserts his presence; he unashamedly confronts us with his queerness.

According to Salomé, in the late 1970s and 1980s, the Moritzboys experienced persecution since much of Berlin's population held highly homophobic beliefs and maintained hyper-conservative heteronormative notions of masculinity that aligned with the Third Reich's fascist ideologies.[73] Yet, in *Figur an Der Mauer*, Fetting proudly renders an explicitly queer figure occupying a recognizable and highly visible public space in Berlin's landscape. The figure's gestural pose creates a stark contrast against the stiff outline of the Berlin Wall (symbolic of the German governments and authorities).[74] He asserts and affirms queer presence in a landscape that has historically been dominated by anti-gay rhetorics and controlled by homophobic authorities such as the Third Reich or the SED.

As the 1970s began, Berlin's queer communities grew bigger and louder. Young queers began to flee their restrictive rural German small towns which were dominantly governed by outdated 'traditional' homophobic ideologies. Many of them moved to Berlin, a big city which promised more freedom and opportunities.[75] While many still encountered prejudices and persecution, they began to band together, forming communal living situations, opening queer bars and nightlife venues, and organizing to fight for queer liberation.[76] Kreuzberg became the epicenter for the queer community.[77] The West German government's neglect of Kreuzberg gave queers the ability to establish themselves without being overly-scrutinized, allowing them to stay safe and under the authorities' radar.[78] Although much of

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[73] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 28:03.
[74] Bardaouil, Sam, and Catherine Nichols, "Rainer Fetting: The Wall (1987)", *Nationalgalerie: A Collection for the 21st Century*, Hamburger Bahnhof - Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart.
[75] Gerald & Miessgang, *Punk: No-one is Innocent:* 154-155.
[76] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 05:10.
[77] Gerald and Miessgang, *Punk: No One Is Innocent: Art, Style, Revolt*: 155.
[78] Ibid: 7:13

German culture was still traditional and homophobic in the 1970s, Kreuzberg's youths evaded this suffocating mainstream cultural discourse and created a strong and resilient queer community. Drawing on their collective will not just to survive, but to thrive, they built an electric and vibrant queer scene. Their gatherings were lively, energetic, and plentiful; the intensity of life that marked Kreuzberg's punk scene permeated its queer scene, particularly as the two communities began to blend together.[79] Kreuzberg's queer community continued to grow throughout the 1970s, becoming even stronger, as more and more queer German youths moved there in search of community and freedom.[80] As such, even though their presence was often overlooked and ignored by mainstream German society, Kreuzberg had a vibrant and blossoming queer scene in the postwar era.

In *Figur an Der Mauer*, Fetting's affirmation of queer vibrancy is reinforced by the fact that the figure and the natural elements (i.e., the ground and sky) are vividly coloured while the Berlin Wall is devoid of color. This work reminds us that Kreuzberg's queer community was vibrant and present, while also reflecting punk's affective atmosphere through formal elements. As such, this work hints at the convergence of Kreuzberg's punk and queer subcultures.

Salomé

In the late 1970s, Fetting was publicly coupled with Salomé, and "the desire for social change and public acceptance of their homosexuality was [...] reflected in both artists' work".[81] However, Salomé's artistic exploration of queerness is arguably more individualistic, personal, and subjective than Fetting's. After moving to Berlin in his late teen years, Salomé became deeply involved in the queer liberation movement.[82] Subsequently, as

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[79] Gerald & Miessgang, *Punk: No-one is Innocent:* 155 & 158.
[80] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 6:45.
[81] Kruppert,"Rainer Fetting", *Berlinischegalerie.*
[82] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 31:48.

he began to develop his artistic practice, he sought to capture Kreuzberg's queer subcultural community through the lens of his own experience within it. Much like Middendorf's and Fetting's works, Salomé's works rarely depict distinctive backgrounds or landscape elements. He focuses on male figures and their feelings; he emphasizes atmosphere. However, differently from Middendorf and Fetting, Salomé depicts his figures with distinctive facial features, allotting them an individualistic identity. Moreso, he often depicts his own face and body. Such is the case with *Self Portrait* (1981) (Figure 12). In this fairly large-scale portrait (approx. 140 x 76 cm), Salomé paints himself from the torso up. The top of his head is cropped out by the top border of the canvas. His body occupies the majority of the work's composition, giving him an impactful stature. Salomé was often called "weird-looking" due to the fact that he was really skinny, strangely dressed, and wearing lots of makeup.[83] However, rather than trying to dispel this perception, he leaned into it. As he explained, he enjoys presenting as highly effeminate and theatrically stylizing his body; he likes to look visibly queer.[84] *Self Portrait* exemplifies this perfectly. It captures the unashamedly unconventional way that he presented himself to the world. It captures his essence and his experience of queerness. The work's composition is incredibly vivid, bright, and lively. This reflects the vibrant atmosphere of queer subculture in Kreuzberg. Importantly, the fact that homosexuality is now so prominent and widely accepted in Berlin "is something we owe in part to [the Moritzboys] who used art as a way to fight discrimination and to propagate the acceptance of a variety of lifestyles".[85]

In *Self Portrait*, we see Salomé's shaved head and face, donned with bright red lipstick and piercing blue eyes accentuated with bright eyeshadow and eye-liner. He is shirtless, wearing a brightly coloured blue blazer jacket. His gaze is direct and unwavering.

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[83] Ibid, 47:07.
[84] Ibid, 56:25.
[85] Fassbender, et. al., *Rainer Fetting – Berlin*: 7.

Yet, his chin is tilted downwards, in a suggestively submissive and flirtatious manner. He cheekily confronts viewers with himself – with his existence as an unashamedly queer man. He asserts and affirms his effeminate queerness, leaving no room for lack of acceptance. This self-portrait is also embedded with punk aesthetics. In early punk fashion, "make-up for both boys and girls [was] worn to be seen" and faces were treated as "abstract portraits: sharply observed and meticulously executed studies in alienation".[86] According to Salomé, the image of himself that is presented in this work is tied to Kreuzberg's subcultures, as it captures his inextricable experiences of punk and queerness.[87] Further, the formal intensity of this work mirrors the intensity of subcultural life in Kreuzberg. Like Middendorf and Fetting, Salomé uses specific formal elements, such as jagged lines, gestural brushwork, bright coloring, and heavy lighting, to reflect the intense and chaotic affective atmosphere of punk life in postwar Kreuzberg. In sum, *Self-Portrait* captures Salomé's personal experience of queerness through a punk lens.

The aesthetic entanglement of Salomé's affective experience of queerness and punkness in Kreuzberg is also observable *Verschärftes Aufsteigen (Aggravated Rising)* (1981) (Figure 13). In this large-scale work (240 x 200 cm), we see a composition that is comparable to many of Middendorf's works. There are five naked male bodies scattered throughout the composition. Their sizes vary, making it appear as though some are closer to the foreground while others are farther in the background. The background of this work is composed of gestural red, green, blue, yellow, and white brushwork. There are no distinctive landscape elements or objects in this work. The only distinguishable shapes are the male figures' bodies. They are the focal point of this work. Further, since all of the figures are completely naked, it is specifically their bodies that become the focal point of the work. As

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[86] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 107.
[87] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 53:07.

previously explained, affect is an intangible in-body sensation.[88] By ridding this work of any elements beyond the figure's bodies, Salomé forces us to pay attention to these bodies' affective presences. We are informed only by their body language and facial expressions.

These figures are all in unique but equally dynamic poses. Their dynamism is mirrored by Salomé's use of vivid colors and intensely gestural brushwork. The figures' body languages convey a sense of domination, energy, and power. Particularly, the figure on the front left side has his chest puffed out, hands in fists, and a mean-mugging facial expression. He is asserting his dominance and taunting us from his position on the canvas. This is reinforced by his large-scale. His body occupies the entire height of this canvas; at 240cm, he towers over viewers. This figure embodies the aggression, angst, and dominance that is associated with conventional masculinity. Importantly, all of the figures in this work are modeled directly off of Salomé's own body.[89] So, these figures have explicitly queer effeminate bodies, yet simultaneously embody a machismo that is conventionally associated to heteronormative manhood. As such, they complicate conventional heteronormativity and masculinity.

Salomé's use of his queer male body as a disruptive and subversive model is better understood through the work of cultural theorist Judith Butler. In her text "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", Butler illustrates that society has come to falsely perceive heterosexuality and the gender binary as inherent and naturalized, and has historically punished individuals' deviations from conventional performances of gender (i.e., non-normative ways of stylizing the body that are not perceived as being in line with its sex).[90] Butler claims that "gender is in no way a stable

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[88] Resser, "Approaching Affective Masculinities": 103-5.
[89] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*:1:04:32.
[90] Butler, Judith,"Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", *Theater Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, December 1988: 528.

identity" but rather "an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts".[91]

Consequently, if gender can be understood as something that is not inherent or naturalized

but rather constructed through a series of performed acts, then it can then also be de/re

constructed unconventionally through different acts.[92] This is precisely what Salomé does in

Verschärftes Aufsteigen. He ascribes his own queer body with affective expressions that are

conventionally culturally-coded as masculine and associated to heteronormative

conceptualizations of masculinity (i.e., anger, angst, aggression, etc.). Through this queer

rendering of masculine affect in *Verschärftes Aufsteigen* Salomé calls heteronormativity and

conventional images of masculinity into question.

　　　　In addition to complicating – and subsequently challenging – conventional

heteronormative masculinity, *Verschärftes Aufsteigen* questions the patriarchal structures that

shaped Salomé's specific day and age. This painting is one part of a larger installation that

Salomé created in response to the 'Iran Hostage Crisis'.[93] The Iran Hostage Crisis was a high-

profile diplomatic dispute that involved Iranian revolutionaries taking over sixty hostages at

the United States Embassy in Tehran for more than a year.[94] This incident increased political

and cultural tensions between the United States and Iran. Ruhollah Khomeini was a

prominent figure of authority in Iran who sanctioned the Iranian revolutionary's actions in the

Iran Hostage Crisis; he supported a strict hyper patriarchal Islamic religious state that

enforced heteronormativity and oppressed anything else.[95] Salomé stood in violent opposition

to Khomeni. He wanted to explicitly criticize Khomeni's actions and the oppressive,

patriarchal nature of his regime.[96] Below *Verschärftes Aufsteigen*, Salomé displayed another

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[91] Ibid, 519.

[92] Ibid, 520.

[93] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 1:02:45.

[94] Wallenfeldt, Jeff, "Iran hostage crisis", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 12 January 2023.

[95] Newman, Andrew, "Shi'i", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 23 October 2007. & Wallenfeldt, Jeff, "Iran hostage crisis", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 12 January 2023.

[96] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 1:02:45.

canvas that depicted women in positions of oppression. This layout positioned men as being literally above women, shown in aggressive, authoritative stances. This was intended to shed light on the patriarchal nature of the ruling state in Iran, but also in Germany.[97] Further, the title '*Verschärftes Aufsteigen*' translates to "Aggravated Rising", hinting towards the violent impetus of manhood and heteronormative patriarchal governing bodies. It also calls attention to the broad-scale political and cultural repercussions of masculine structures of authority.[98] The politically charged nature of this work's subject matter helps us understand Salomé's concerns and political attitudes. This criticism of dominant structures and authoritarian governments was typical of early German punks.[99] It is likely that these views were mirrored by other punks Kreuzberg, especially since members of subcultural communities tend to share similar values and beliefs.[100] So, this work provides insight into the concerns and ideologies of Salomé and his contemporaries (i.e., Kreuzberg's postwar punks).

Evidently, questioning notions of masculinity through the lens of queerness and punk was common practice for Salomé, as is again observable in *Nackt in Gelb (Naked in Yellow)* (1981) (Figure 14). There are many formal resemblances between *Verschärftes Aufsteigen* and *Nackt in Gelb*, including their large dimensions (240 x 200cm). However, unlike *Verschärftes Aufsteigen*, this work is not tied to a political event. Rather, it is a visualization of Salomé's affective experience of life. This work is an attempt to capture hard-to-pin-down feelings that are made visible and knowable through the body.[101]

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[97] Ibid: 1:03:30.

[98] For further reading on the structures of masculinity and authority in the Cold War: Dumančić, Marko, "Hidden in Plain Sight: The History of Gender and Sexuality in the Cold War", in *Gender, Sexuality and the Cold War: A Global Perspective,* University Press, Nashville, 2017, pp. 1-12.

[99] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 11.

[100] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 114.

[101] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 1:11:04.

The figures in *Nackt in Gelb* are modeled after Salomé's body; he set up a camera in his loft at Orianstrasse, then threw himself around, thrashing, releasing all internalized feelings and giving them visceral tangibility through his body's movements.[102] Many of these movements resemble punk mosh pit moves (such as pogoing or slamdancing) and Salomé approached these movements with the same level of intensity that he would bring to a performance with this punk band Geile Tiere.[103] The sense of high-energy, intensity, and aggression created by the figures' movements is then reinforced by formal elements of the work, such as gestural brushwork, jagged lines, and vivid coloring.

The lack of objects and landscape elements in this work encourages viewers to pay more attention to the overall atmosphere of the scene. Since the only distinctive elements are the naked male figures, viewers are urged to focus on their movements, their expressions, and their in-body presence. As previously mentioned, these figures embody an energetic aggression and angst. Particularly, the largest figure in this work, occupying most of the center-right area of the composition, seems to be charging towards the viewer. Much like the figure on the front left side of *Verschärftes Aufsteigen*, this figure's body language is aggressive and confrontational. Despite their resemblances, these two figures are meant to represent different things. The figure in *Verschärftes Aufsteigen* explicitly embodies the aggression linked to patriarchy, heteronormativity, and masculine domination, while the figure in *Nackt in Gelb* embodies the positive intensely visceral release of aggression enabled by the physical freedom of punk performances. However, without additional didactic information, it is difficult, as viewers, to differentiate the two distinct affective experiences being depicted in these works. This highlights the opacity of affective experience. Like in *Verschärftes Aufsteigen*, the display of hyper-masculinity in *Nackt in Gelb* is complicated by

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[102] Ibid, 1:09:30.
[103] Gerald and Miessgang, *Punk: No One Is Innocent: Art, Style, Revolt*: 160.

the presence of Salomé's queer body. Aggression and anger may be conventionally associated with heteronormative manhood, but Salomé disrupts this by inserting his intentionally effeminized queer body within this affective experience. As such, with *Nackt in Gelb*, Salomé complicates and challenges common heteronormative understandings of masculinity and manhood through affect.

Moreover, as Salomé explained, he and the other Moritzboys enjoyed painting graphic nudes of the male body since it shocked and upset conservative, heteronormative viewers and other reserved members of German society.[104] He continued to explain that, in the 1970s and 1980s, Germany's artistic landscape was dominated by older generations who maintained homophobic and conservative attitudes.[105] So, queer art that depicted the nude male body was considered to be particularly transgressive. Such artworks were met with vehement disapproval on behalf of long-standing art institutions, critics, and audiences.[106] A parallel can be drawn here; while punks used their clothing to be disruptive and provocative, the Moritzboys used the naked male body and the absence of clothing to the same effect.[107] As such, Salomé's use of the naked queer male body as shocking and transgressive is in line with punk methods and ideologies.

Furthermore, in his essay "Eros and the Male Spirit", Moore explains that sexuality is deeply embedded in the construction of masculine identity and often becomes entangled with feelings of angst and aggression.[108] Otherwise put, according to heteronormative ideology, a man's sexual behavior is meant to be directed towards a woman over whom he can exert power and dominance. When a man partakes in sexual behavior, it is loaded with his innate masculine aggression through which he is then able to dominate the woman. However,

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[104] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 29:46.
[105] Ibid: 30:12.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Skylar, Monica, *Punk Style*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2021: 42.
[108] Mohr, *Burning Down the Haus*: 30-34.

Salomé complicates and challenges this heteronormative conceptualization of the sexualized male body as authoritative with *Nackt in Gelb*. In the bottom right side of the composition, right below the aforementioned large and menacing figure, there is a smaller figure on his hands and knees. This figure's pose mimics the receiving end of the 'doggy style' sex position which is often associated to queer male sex. Since a male figure is shown in the submissive position, it challenges the heteronormative idea of male dominance in sex. Yet, this work also avoids reducing the queer male body to inherently feminized and subsequently submissive. While this submissive figure is modeled after Salomé, so are the more dominant figures. Salomé's body's versatility between dominance and submission affirms a spectrum of queer masculinity. Finally, this work alludes to the entanglement of punk and sex. While some of the figures in this work seem to be slam dancing, others seem to be in erotic sexual poses. Yet, they occupy the same space within this composition. This implies a literal and metaphorical proximity between these two actions.

Luciano Castelli

The queer and erotic tendency of punk in postwar Kreuzberg is well illustrated by Salomé's and Luciano Castelli's band: Geile Tiere (i.e., Horny Beasts). The band's name is in and of itself suggestive of aggressive sexually charged energy. This energy becomes visible when observing the band's performances. Like many other punk bands, Geile Tiere's shows were not officially documented. However, footage from their performances has been featured in videos created by other artists who were part of the punk scene in Kreuzberg at the time. For example, Knut Hoffmeister features footage of a Geile Tiere performance in *Hoffmeister Versucht Antworten zu Finden!* (1979-1995). Excerpts from this work, shot on Super 8 film, show Salomé and Castelli on stage, heavily made-up and scantily clad in leather and latex. Their outfits draw on the key aesthetics techniques of punk: do it yourself (DIY),

collage, and dishevelment.[109] Their clothing (or lack thereof), hairstyles, and makeup contentiously blur the lines between masculinity and femininity, while also maintaining a rough and tough quality. Dressed in this characteristically punk attire, Salomé and Castelli sing, scream, and hash at their instruments while thrashing around the stage. Provocative and aggressive, their performance featured in *Hoffmeister Versucht Antworten zu Finden!* embodies the intense affective atmosphere of postwar punk in Berlin.

The pair bring the same performative energy to their visual art practices. *Hoffmeister Versucht Antworten zu Finden!* also includes footage of Castelli painting in his studio. In this clip, Castelli is wearing a black g-string and thigh-high latex boots as he aggressively thrashes his body around, throwing paint onto a canvas. Noisy hardcore punk music is playing in the background. This footage of Castelli is interrupted with explicit pornographic footage. The juxtaposition of these two sequences suggests a likeness between them. There is an intensely erotic and physical quality to Castelli's painting practice. As made evident in this footage, Castelli's purposeful painting practice intentionally embodies punk's "willfully perverse sexuality, obsessive individualism, [and a] fragmented sense of self".[110] Consequently, these elements are all embedded in Castelli's visual art works.

This is made evident in *Olé* (1981) (Figure 15). This work embodies and intertwines the affective atmospheres of the punk and queer subcultures with which Castelli identified. To begin, the formal elements of this work convey the intense energetic charge of punk. The brushwork is gestural, imperfect, and frantic. The colors are vivid and the contrasts are dramatic and intensive. Dark blue accent lines flow seemingly in all directions in the background of the composition, which is devoid of any landscape elements. Once again, we are encouraged to pay attention to the male figures and their affective presences. There is an

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[109] Skylar, *Punk Style*: 54.
[110] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 28.

air of chaos that dominates this work which mimics the chaotic nature of subcultural life in Kreuzberg.[111] Further, the Matador and Bull imagery evokes notions of dominance, control, and power. Matador culture is fueled by notions of machismo and an aggressive hyper-masculinity. Further, it is founded on the premise of one entity (the matador) controlling and dominating another (the bull). This dynamic reflects the government's and authorities' attempts to control and dominate the public in postwar Berlin through heavy ideological and physical policing.

There is a deep animalism to this work. It depicts an almost naked man, wearing nothing besides a black g-string, charging on all fours at a red flag that is being held up by a man wearing nothing but matador boots. Once again, the figures' scantily clad attire is transgressive. In a culture averse to non-heteronormative naked male bodies, these figures would have shocked and upset conventional publics. Castelli's transgressive figures embody both the punk impetus to shock and outrage, and the queer impetus to disrupt oppressive heteronormativity through explicit visibility. Further, this personified rendering of the 'charging bull' trope evokes a sense of primal, animalistic affective behavior and feverish aggression. The sense of intensity and aggression is furthered by the intermittent use of jagged red brushstrokes throughout the figure's bodies.

This work also evokes the name of Castelli's band: Horny Beasts. It is a double entendre. The Bull is horny in that, literally, it has horns on its head, but also in that it is sexually charged. Like Salomé's figure in "Nackt in Gelb", the personified bull figure's pose evokes the receiving end of doggy style sex. Yet, this figure is simultaneously loaded with a viscerally aggressive and erotic energy. He is posed as though he is ready to charge. *Olé* highlights the complicated and contentious entanglement of sexuality, aggression, and masculinity. As previously explored, this entanglement shaped the interconnected punk and

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[111] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 113.

queer subcultures in Kreuzberg. So, Castelli's work not only embodies the intensive affective atmosphere of punk and an unmissable queer eroticism, it also highlights the complex interconnectedness of these two spheres of subcultural life in postwar Kreuzberg.

Salomé & Castelli

In addition to being a couple and making music together, Salomé and Castelli also had collaborative painting practices. Their collective creative practices represent the sense of community, cooperation, and collaboration that began to grow in Kreuzberg during the late 1970s. In their joint works, they sought to explore their lived affective realities as active members in Kreuzberg's queer and punk scenes, through a politically and socially conscious lens. Such is the case for *Rote Liebe (Red Love)* (1979) (Figure 16). Not only is this work loaded with symbolism and semiotic hints to the attitudes of postwar Kreuzberg's punks and queers, it is also loaded with a distinctive affective atmosphere. These artists heavily relied on strategic uses of formal elements to convey affect. *Rote Liebe* is loaded with the intensive, aggressive, angsty, and erotic affective energy of Kreuzberg's overlapping punk and queer subcultures. The heavy-handed gestural and jagged brushwork, with paint drops overflowing and dripping chaotically, is embedded with the feelings of erotic aggression that fuels these artist's painting practices (as observable in *Hoffmeister Versucht Antworten zu Finden!*). This erotic aggression is then furthered by the "poisonous yellow [and] orgasmic interweaving of bodies [which] lets the dynamism of erotic expenditure continue to tremble as a stilled life".[112] In this monumentally large composition (240 x 400 cm), a heavy sense of movement is created by linework flowing in all directions. This, combined with the vivid coloring, gives the scene a lively quality – bordering on overstimulation– which mirrors the essence of bustling city life in postwar Kreuzberg.

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[112] Gerald and Miessgang, *Punk: No One Is Innocent: Art, Style, Revolt*: 27.

Like many of the aforementioned artworks, there are no distinctive landscape

elements in *Rote Liebe*, and the figures are only crudely rendered bodies without hyper

realistic distinguishing features. So, viewers are encouraged to focus less on how everything

looks and more on how it feels. The bodies themselves, in their poses and expressions, are

also loaded with affective energy. They are at once aggressive, dominant, and erotic. While

the majority of the figures' faces are only roughly-rendered, it is evident that they are bald

and wearing heavy amounts of dramatic makeup. Once again, the figures in this work were

modeled after Salomé's likeness and were meant to capture his distinct and complex

effeminately queer performance of masculinity. The figures' faces have enough detail so that

they appear to be looking directly at (or even down upon) the viewer, with a smolderingly

fierce pout. They are unashamed and powerfully assertive with their visible queerness. They

also give off an air of dominance and control, as if they were figures of authority. This is

reinforced by looking at the figure on the far-left side of the work's composition. Faced away

from us, this figure is shirtless, well-built, wearing leather pants and boots, arm cuffs, and a

leather police-style hat. He has tattoos on his arms and he is holding a whip in his right hand.

This figure is a 'leather daddy' – a top/dominant male member of the queer BDSM and

leather fetish community.[113] A 'leather daddy' is explicitly associated with notions of queer

hyper-masculinity, dominance, authority, and control.[114] This figure symbolizes and

embodies all of these attributes. Such a character complicates the notion of conventional

heteronormative masculine gender performance. On one hand, he embodies every

characteristic that has come to be culturally coded as conventional heteronormative

masculinity; he is tough, hard, mean, macho, and, ultimately "the ideal masculine type".[115]

Yet, he is queer. He embodies heteronormative masculinity while engaging in non-

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[113] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 1:19:07.

[114] Cole, *'Don We Now Our Gay Apparel': Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century*: 107.

[115] Cole, *'Don We Now Our Gay Apparel': Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century*: 109.

heternomative acts. He looks hyper-heteronormative and yet he is not. His re-construction of queer male identity disrupts society's reductive understanding of hegemonic heteronormativity.[116]

Queer BDSM-style leatherman fashion emerged in the late 1960s, when queer men began to adopt hyper masculine fashion styles as a transgressive affront against mainstream society's perception of homosexuals as effeminate.[117] Amongst the hyper masculine fashions styles that influenced the leathermen were the 'hard-mods', the 'hot-rod boys' and the 'bikers' from the 1950s.[118] These fashion styles are composed largely of leather gear, braces, blue jeans, heavy work boots, and short hair, and are associated with the 'white lumpen' (i.e., white blue-collar workers).[119] Many resemblances exist between these fashions and those adopted by the nazi fascist military movements in WWII. The contentious resemblances between mid century blue-collar worker fashions and fascist fashions gave birth to the skinhead punk aesthetic. Defined by heavy leather, short or shaved hair, cuffs, chains, etc., skinhead style is composed of elements of early twentieth century fascist aesthetics (such as the SS nazi uniforms) blended, through the 'collage' and 'trashy' methods of punk, with aesthetics of working-classness. Both the fascist and skinhead aesthetics are associated with macho male culture. They are rugged, tough, hardworking, and most importantly, hyper masculine. Yet, many subcultural skinhead groups contradict each other politically; while there are far right 'white power' skinheads, there are also far-left and anarchist skinheads.[120] While participating in Kreuzberg's queer and punk subcultures, the Moritzboys (specifically Salomé and Castelli) took on a skinhead style as they began to blend elements of punk and

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[116] Butler,"Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory": 520.

[117] Cole, *'Don We Now Our Gay Apparel': Gay Men's Dress in the Twentieth Century*: 93.

[118] Ibid, 94.

[119] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 55.

[120] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 116.

leatherman aesthetics. Interestingly, their emulation of the specific skinhead aesthetic was somewhat unintentional. According to Salomé, he did not explicitly intend to dress like a skinhead. He wore heavy leather clothes, boots, and braces to identify both as a punk and as a BDSM leatherman, and he only shaved his head since he was balding.[121] Yet, even if unintentional, the leathermen style, as witnessable in *Rote Liebe*, bears an undeniable resemblance to early fascist skinhead style.

Salomé further explained that the Moritzboys intentionally dressed themselves in a way that would be seen as disruptive and upsetting by authorities and the general public.[122] In line with this, it was common for young German punks in the postwar era to adopt nazi imagery as a form of dissent against the SED since it was perceived as "the ultimate taboo in a country explicitly founded on anti-nazi ideology".[123] These punks also blended symbols of Nazism with those of east German authorities, in order to try to call attention to the regimes' similarly authoritarian nature.[124] This complex connection is embodied by the resemblance the 'leather daddy' depicted in *Rote Liebe* shares with officers of fascist and authoritarian state groups. Their uniforms are visually quite similar (though one is more scantily clad); they include heavy leather clothing, military/authority uniform style hats, and even armbands. They also allot the individuals wearing them a position of power, control, domination, and authority over others. The adoption of fascist aesthetics by members of demographics who would have been explicitly prosecuted and targeted by fascist regimes (such as punks and queers) is a form of postmodern parody, and therefore, highly subversive.[125]

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[121] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 55:13.
[122] Ibid, 49:46.
[123] Mohr, *Burning Down the Haus*: 58.
[124] Ibid, 97.
[125] Ryan, Allan, "Postmodern Parody: A Political Strategy in Contemporary Canadian Native Art", *Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3, Autumn 1992: 60.

While the incorporation of fascist imagery and aesthetics in *Rote Liebe* is somewhat subtle, and perhaps even unintentional, it was discernible enough to be upsetting to postwar German authorities and publics alike.[126] This artwork is transgressive toward all postwar German authorities who were set on maintaining the divide between capitalism and communism. It features the red stars of communism, shown emerging out of a sex-doll's vagina, traversing the rest of the composition, and surrounding the 'leather daddy'. This creates an explicit visual link between the 'leather daddy' figure and the communist SED state. This was highly disruptive considering how homosexuality was heavily frowned upon in the SED. Further, the title of this work translates to 'Red Love', evoking the communist state in a way that implies connection and compassion. 'Red love', instead of 'red scare', calls for a unification of the west with the eastern communist state. This alludes to young German punks' desire for connection despite being born and raised in a divided country. The phenomenon of subcultural exchange between east and west Germany is referenced in Salomé's and Castelli's *Rote Liebe*, much like it is in Middendorf's *Big City Natives* and *Großstadt Eingeborene*, which allows us to better understand their attitudes and beliefs on the issue. Evidently, the Moritzboys did not want to remain divided by the Berlin Wall. So, in sum, works such as *Rote Liebe* can help us better understand the aesthetics, attitudes, and beliefs of queer punks in Kreuzberg.

Bernd Zimmer

To bring my analysis to a conclusion, I will examine the works of Bernd Zimmer. Zimmer's practice distinguishes itself from the rest of the Moritzboys; he often worked independently and engaged with different subject matter. Yet, like his contemporaries, many of Zimmer's early works embody the complex intensity of life as he experienced it within

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[126] Stewart and Salomé, *Interview with Salomé*: 29:46.

Krezuberg's queer and punk subcultures. His works show viewers what he was thinking about, how he felt, and which subjects and ideologies influenced him. Such is the case for *Verwandlung (Transformation)* (1983) (Figure 17). This artwork title translates directly to 'transformation', but is more likely translatable to 'metamorphosis'. Given that Zimmer worked as a book publisher and book seller, it is likely that his artistic practice was influenced by the literary world. As such, *Verwandlung* evokes Franz Kafka's iconic 1915 novel *The Metamorphosis*.[127] This novel deals heavily with themes of absurdity, existentialism, and alienation, all of which were also philosophical guidelines for German punks in the 1970s and 1980s.[128] This novel was also the source of inspiration for the 1959 novel *Naked Lunch* written by beat writer William S. Burroughs.[129] In *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs blends Kafka's iconic insect imagery with queerness, and pushes Kafka's themes further into the realm of the shocking and provocative. Though it is not directly referenced, Burroughs's novel would have been a relatively recent and influential literary work when Zimmer was working in the literary industry. Burroughs, like many members of the 1960s Beat counterculture movement, was interested in civil rights (notably, anti-police), queer experience, drug use, and aesthetics experimentation.[130] These elements often permeated his artistic practice. Many of these elements were also heavily influential on the first generations of punks in the 1970s and, in turn, permeated their artistic practices.[131] We can begin to see that Zimmer was likely influenced by the writings of Kafka and Burroughs.

Based on Zimmer's title, we can also start to decipher what is depicted within the artwork itself. The background is made up of a blur of largely blue brushwork which

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[127] Kafka, Franz, *Metamorphosis,* W.W. Norton, New York, 2014.
[128] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 11 & 29.
[129] Burroughs, William S., *Naked Lunch*, Grove Press, New York, 2013.
[130] Tikkanen, Amy, "William S. Burroughs", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 19 July 2022.
[131] Hayton and Lison,"'The Revolution Is Over and We Have Won!': Alfred Hilsberg, West German Punk, and the Sixties": 137.

emanates in multiple directions. This coloring is then layered with lines of white, black, and brown which create divisions between the different hues of blue and points of highlight throughout the work. Some of these brushstrokes are done to create distinctive senses of movement. For example, the white lines laid on top of the blue coloring in the top right corner swirl in a way that illustratively imitates the blowing of the wind. Differently, the brown brushwork is thrown on top of the composition with no distinctive direction. This arguably aimless brushwork mirrors the aimlessness associated with punk youths. It also creates a sense of chaos and dirtiness that imitates the atmosphere associated with Kreuzberg in the postwar era. Even though this work is not explicitly about Zimmer's subcultural life in Kreuzberg, his subcultural affective lived experiences still infiltrate the work through his use of formal elements.

Furthermore, layered on top of the abstract background in *Verwandlung*, we see two figures. One is rendered in all-black, as if it is a shadow or a silhouette, and another figure is outlined with agitated blue and white brushstrokes. Their bodies are intertwined. Of note, the black figure's outline seems to deteriorate towards its legs. Its upper body has a distinct shape while its lower half seems to collapse into a tail of abstracted black brushwork. This tail is cut off by a section that is blended with white brushstrokes, giving the faint impression of it swirling. Although the outlines are very rough, this bottom section could be perceived as some sort of husk, almost like a cocoon. This analysis is supported by the work's title: Transformation/Metamorphosis. The blue figure is undergoing a transfiguration as it emerged from its husk which is represented by the black form.

However, upon first laying eyes on this work, with no understanding of what 'Verwandlung' meant, I certainly did not read the subject matter as such. When I looked upon this large (200 x 160 cm) canvas, I saw a tender scene: two figures embracing each other. The face of the blue figure seems to meld into the other's as if they are kissing. Staring at it for a

moment longer, I was overcome with hesitation. Are they embracing? Or are they fighting? Admittedly, the hours spent prior to this moment observing the aggressively charged and erotic figures of Middendorf, Fetting, Salomé, and Castelli may have coloured my impressions. However, I think this impression warrants further scrutiny, regardless of Zimmer's intentionality. *Verwandlung* has an undeniably ambiguity. Even this work's affective atmosphere is unclear. The agitated quality of the bruhswork creates an air of aggression, while, at the same time, the blue color scheme elicits a sense of melancholy. The chaotic lines are starkly distinctive and somewhat jarring, yet they simultaneously drift together in a unifying ebb and flow. This work blurs the line between aggression and tenderness through its rendering of two arguably male figures in a complexly intertwined position. As such, it mystifies and complicates the interaction between these two male bodies. This suggests a nuance in male relationship dynamics which contradicts society's attempt to hegemonize them through the enforcement of binaries (man vs. woman, gay vs. straight) and heteronormativity.[132] By creating an image that is in and of itself ambiguous and hard to read, Zimmer challenges the widely held hegemonic beliefs of mainstream culture and authorities. Through his ambiguous subjects and affect, Zimmer complicates and queers perceptions of masculinity. This affective ambiguity and resistance to being fully understood or clearly defined is also typical of punk subculture.[133] As such, whether it was intentional or not, Zimmer imbues his work with the ideologies, methods, and affective charges of the queer and punk subcultures in postwar Kreuzberg.

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[132] Butler,"Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory": 528.
[133] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 26.

Conclusion

By analyzing the Moritzboys' works together, we can begin to piece together an affectively charged archive of Kreuzberg's queer and punk subcultures in the postwar era. We can understand the attitudes, aesthetics, and affect of these subcultures. We can also see how the Moritzboys created a distinctive highly transgressive aesthetic that undermined societal conventions, hegemonic and governing structures, as well as state authorities of the time. Studying the Moritzboys' works provides us with a better understanding of Kreuzberg's postwar queer and punk subcultures, subsequently offering us insight into an obscured chapter of history. It also allows us to better understand how these subcultures have shaped the neighborhood of Kreuzberg into what it is today.

There are many ways in which this project could be expanded. I would argue that the next step in this study is to bring in an analysis of the Moritzboys' depictions of landscape and territory. While this facet of study did not fit into the scope of my current project, I will tease out its potentiality through a brief analysis of another of Zimmer's work, *Brennende Fabrik III (Burning Factory III)* (1981) (Figure 18). I had the pleasure of encountering this work for the first time in person during my visit to Galerie Deschler. I was completely drawn in by this artwork. Its notable vertical scale (205 x 160 cm) made it seem like a portal away from the gallery and into Zimmer's scene. I felt as though I could step into it like a doorway. However, I was not sure that I wanted to, since the scene in this work is an apocalyptic one. The composition is dominated by red, orange, and hints of yellow. These colors flow towards the top left side of the composition in messy squiggling lines that evoke the sight of fiery flames. It is as though these flames are enveloping the beams of the building-like structure that is depicted in black.

This sense of flaming hellishness is affirmed by the work's title which translates to *Burning Factory III*. The fact that this is the third work in this series implies that Zimmer had

a repeated interest in the subject of burning factories. It shows a fascination with dystopia, destruction, and decay; these characteristics aptly describe postwar Berlin's landscape, specifically Kreuzberg and other impoverished neighborhoods.[134] World War II left a huge physical impact on Berlin's landscape, one that took decades to begin to rectify. Kreuzberg was largely underfunded and neglected in the Cold War era, meaning many buildings remained destroyed. They were left condemned by the city and deteriorated in ruins. These old neglected and decrepit buildings were turned into squat houses for punks and other outcasts (such as queers) to inhabit; they became the epicenters of subcultural gatherings, community, and culture.[135] *Brennende Fabrik III* calls attention to the dystopian landscape of ruin that housed and shaped these subcultural communities.

While the title of this work suggests that the building on fire is a factory, there are details in the building's skeleton that resemble christian crosses. These crosses were the first things that stood out to me when I originally examined this work. Before translating its title, I believed this work was depicting a burning church. The fiery apocalyptic atmosphere of this scene is in and of itself reminiscent of "the rhetoric of punk [which] was drenched in apocalypse".[136] Whether it is understood to be a burning church or a burning factory, this scene reflects the apocalyptic ideology of punks and queer in Kreuzberg.[137] As also observed in *Verdwanglung*, ambiguous imagery is common in Zimmer's works. It mirrors the opacity of subculture and, more specifically, the contentiously hard-to-read nature of punk. So, this work reflects the spatiality, affective atmosphere, and attitudes of Zimmer's subcultural punk community.

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[134] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 131.
[135] Ibid, 90.
[136] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*: 27.
[137] Weh, *Geniale Dilletanten. Subculture in Germany in the 1980s*: 131.

Works such as this shed light on how the affective experience of life for artists like Zimmer permeated space and impacted their experience within their specific physical setting. Zimmer was especially interested in landscapes, so much so that he went on to pursue a landscape-specific painting practice in his later years. He was not the only one of the Moritzboys to explore this subject matter. Many of the Moritzboys were concerned with the experience of living in the physical landscape of postwar Kreuzberg. Space and landscape are incredibly impactful on the subcultures situated within them. So, it seems only natural that the Moritzboys – with their determinedly affective archival impulse, feverishly seeking to capture the experience of their lived realities – became interested in painting the physical spaces around them. In many of their works, the Moritzboys explore how their physical settings shaped the lives they lived. For example, in addition to his *Figure and the Wall* series, Fetting created many works that represented important spaces and physical landmarks in Berlin. Additionally, Salomé expanded his artistic practice in the 1980s and began to create landscape-centric works. Clearly, there is a need to further develop the study of the Moritzboys' work by expanding the body of work being considered. In doing so, we may further expand the understanding of the punk and postwar subcultures of Kreuzberg gained through this initial analysis

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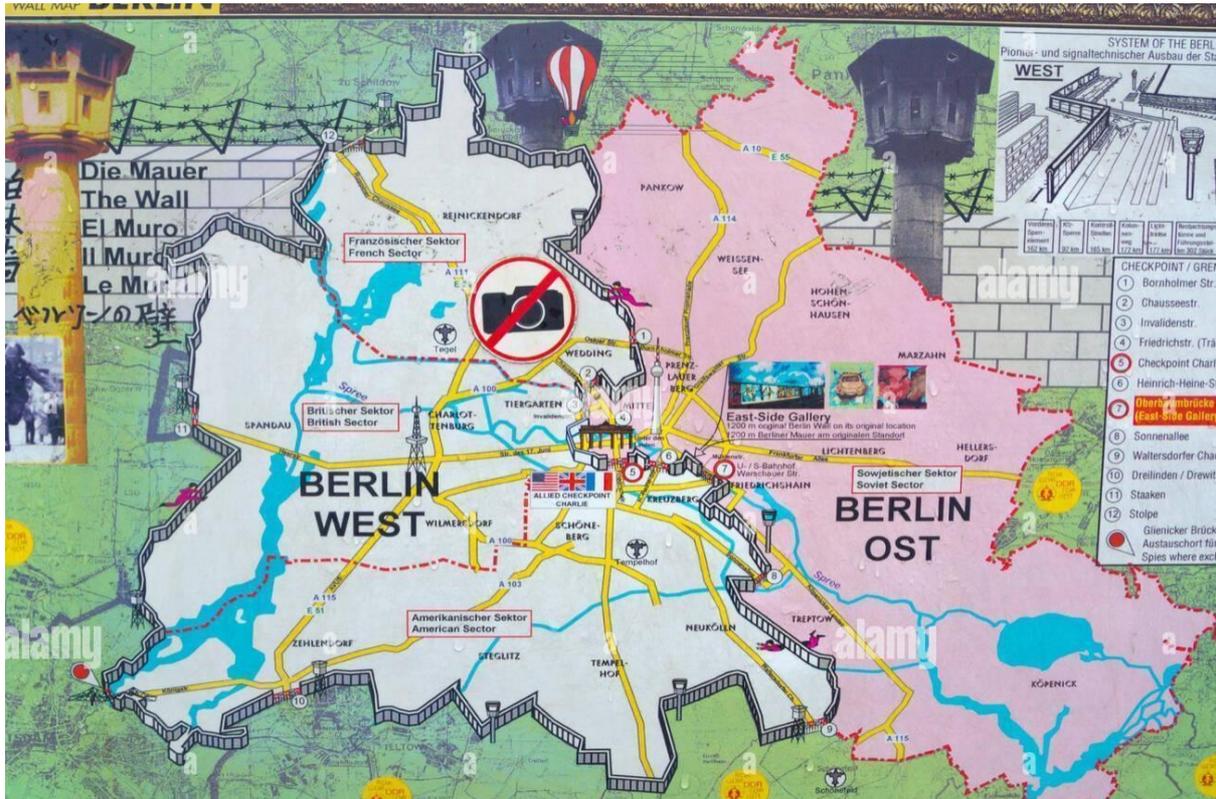
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Illustrations

Figure 1. *The East German Secret Police's Illustrated Guide for Identifying Youth Subcultures*, 1985, from the Museum in der Runden Ecke.

Figure 2. *Map showing East and West Berlin before 1990*, Source: East Side Gallery, Friedrichshain, Berlin.

Figure 3. Helmut Middendorf, *Electric Night,* 1979, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 300 cm

Figure 4. Helmut Middendorf**,** *Big City Natives*, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 190 x 270 cm

Figure 5. Helmut Middendorf, *Großstadt Eingeborene*, 1979, acrylic on canvas, 155 x 190 cm

Figure 6. Helmut Middendorf, *The Singer*, 1981, acrylic on canvas, 175 x 220 cm

Figure 7. Pennie Smith, *London Calling* album cover*,*1980

Figure 8. *London Calling* album cover, 1980 (top), Helmut Middendorf, *The Singer*, 1981 (bottom)

Figure 9. Rainer Fetting, *Grosse Dusche,* 1980, mixed media on canvas, 271 x 300 cm

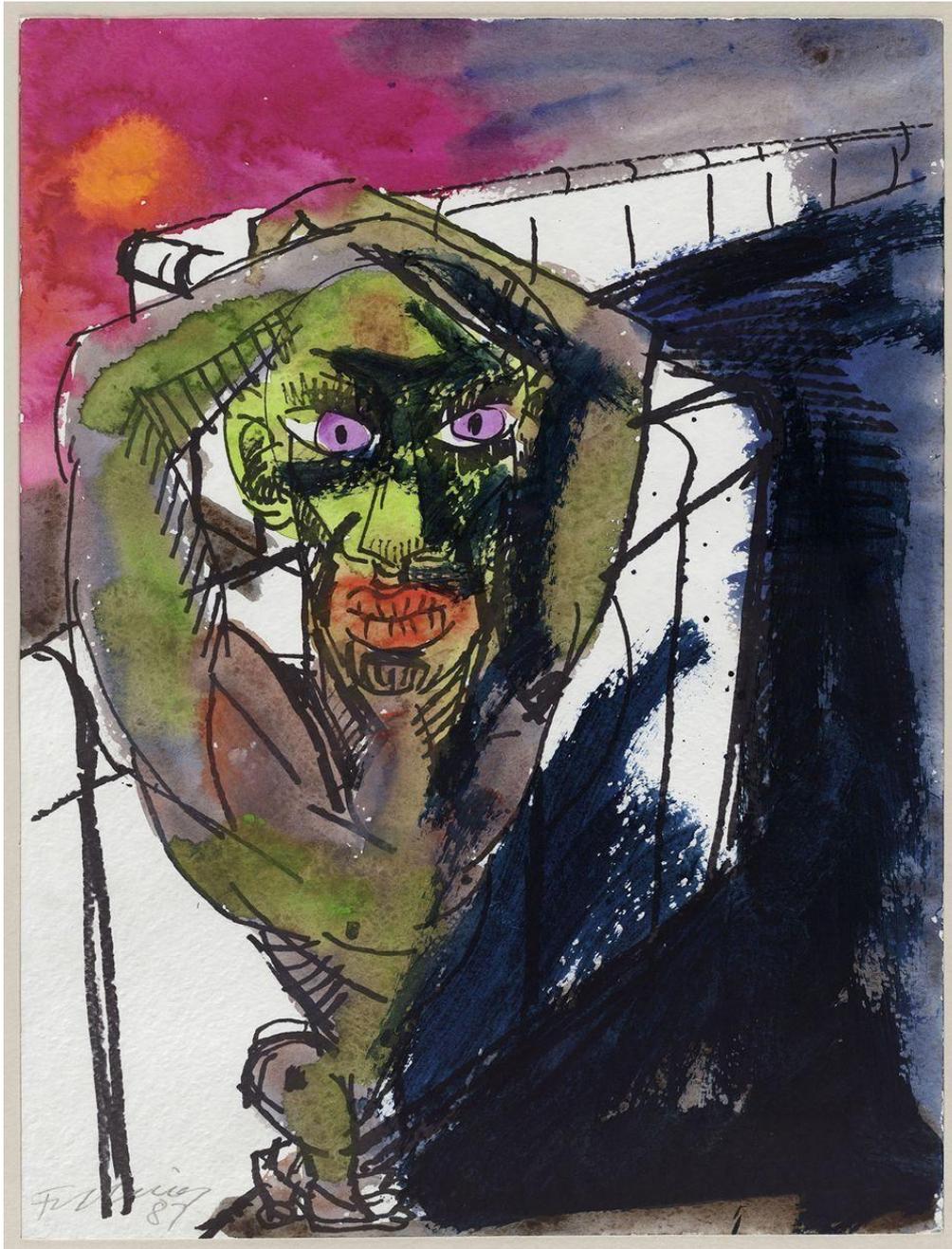**Figure 10.** Rainer Fetting, *Van Gogh und Mauer V*, 1978, mixed media on canvas, 201 x 251 cm

Figure 11. Rainer Fetting, *Figur an der Mauer*, 1987, Watercolour and chalk on drawing board, 72 x 54 cm

Figure 12. Salomé, *Self-portrait*, 1981, gouache and pastel on paper, 139.1 x 76.2 cm

Figure 13. Salomé*, Verschärftes Aufsteigen*, 1981, acrylic on canvas, 240 x 200 cm
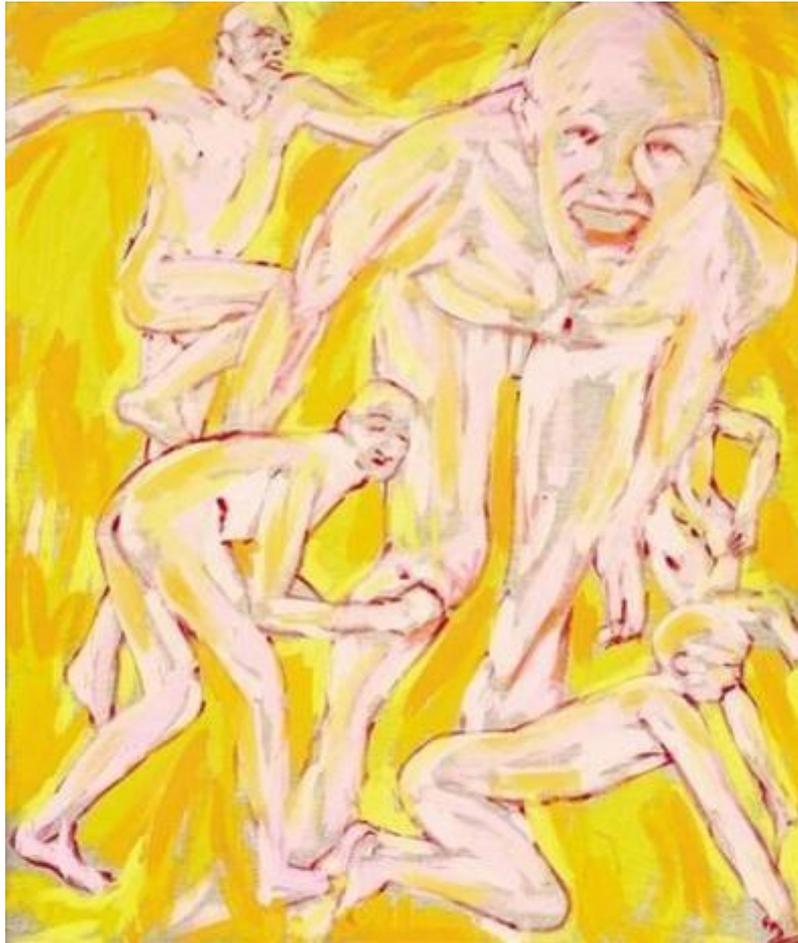
Figure 14. Salomé, *Nackt in Gelb*, 1981, acrylic on canvas, 240 x 200 cm

Figure 15. Luciano Castelli**,** *Olé*, 1981, mixed media on paper, 258 x 244 cm

Figure 16. Luciano Castelli & Salomé, *Rote Liebe*, 1979, mixed media on canvas, 240 x 400 cm

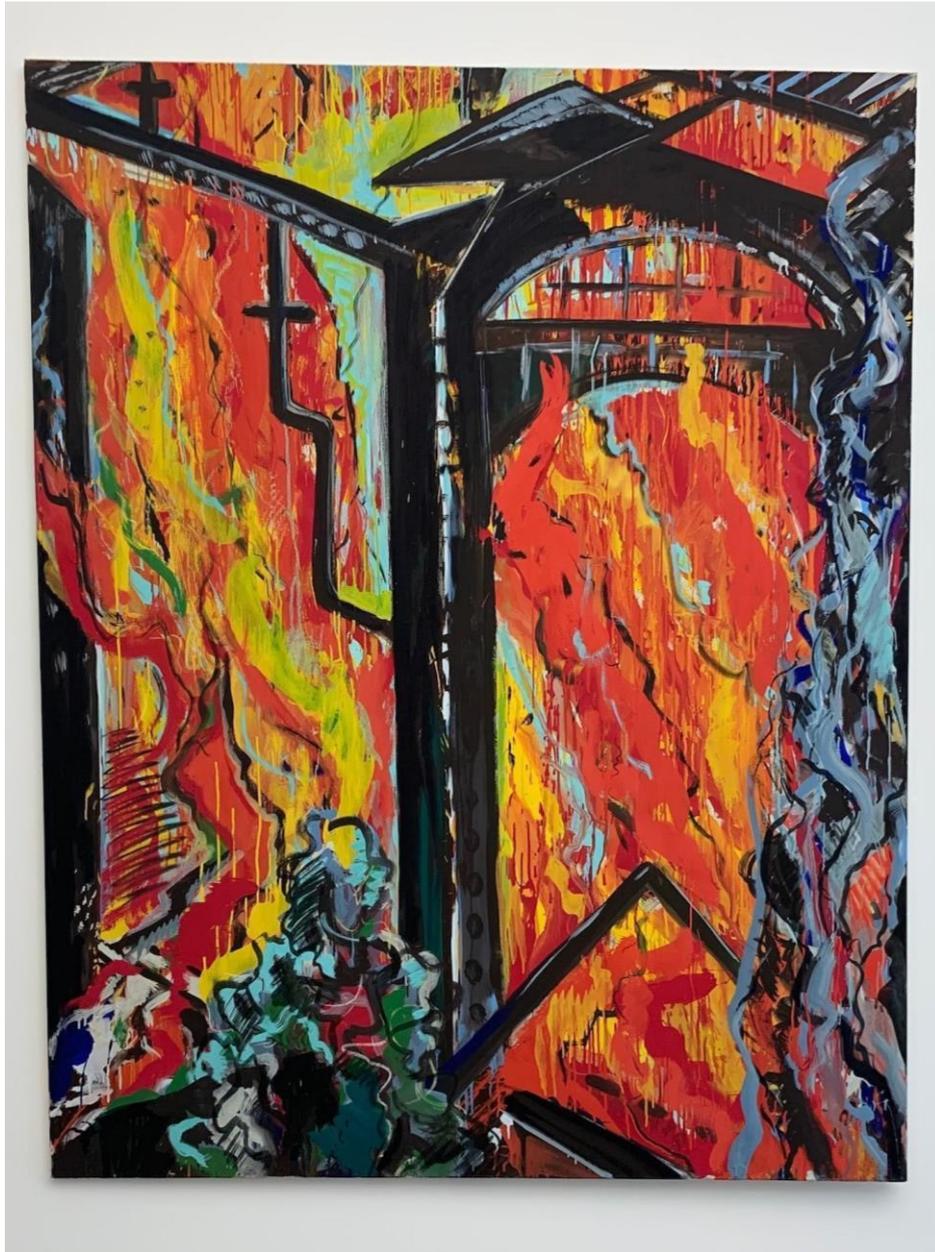**Figure 17.** Bernd Zimmer, *Verwandlung*, 1983, mixed media on canvas, 200 x 160 cm

Figure 18. Bernd Zimmer, *Brennende Fabrik III*, 1981, mixed media on canvas, 205 x 160 cm