

CHRISTIAN PHILIPP MÜLLER

KUNST UND FREUNDSCHAFT

RICARDO VALENTIM

FRIENDSHIP AS AN ARTWORK

Pedro de Llano Neira

The art world often produces bizarre friendships that are based on absence and longing, rather than proximity and warmth. The COVID-19 pandemic has only increased this bitter reality. Certainly, this phenomenon is not exclusive to the art world, but there is no doubt that its conditions (globalization, internationalism, nomadism, the exhaustive use of new technologies, etc.) only serve to reinforce this sense of estrangement. These conditions have also led to new kinds of social relationships and modes of friendship, which are manifested in one way or another in the works that artists produce. Even so, this is perhaps not something so rare, nor recent. After all, works of art are often like those friends with whom we meet from time to time—we love them, they accompany us, and we think of them often, but sadly, we enjoy their presence on rare occasions throughout our lives.

Christian Philipp Müller, Ricardo Valentim, and I met at different times. Christian and Ricardo met for the first time in 2008 at Manifesta 7, in Rovereto, Italy. Christian and I met in Berlin in September 2009, when he was presenting his work *Tohuwabohu* at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. I attended one of his guided tours in which he revealed the secrets of that building erected during the Cold War, while playing a white sousaphone.¹ (I perfectly remember the moment that he invited me to accompany him while playing the Cuban song, “Guantanamera,” since I am a native Spanish speaker.) Six years later, I met Ricardo—through Christian—

when I moved to New York City in the fall of 2015. At the time, Christian was spending time in Brooklyn (he lived in New York from 1992 to 2011), and we got together on several occasions. We often went to see exhibitions in the city, like the David Hammons show at Mnuchin Gallery and the Broodthaers retrospective at MoMA, both held in the spring of 2016.

A common point between the three of us, which possibly helped to bolster our burgeoning friendship, was our admiration for the California artist John Knight. In fact, the first time that we were all together in New York, was at the opening of Knight’s show at Greene Naftali Gallery, titled *A Work in Situ*, held in November 2015, where Christian first introduced Ricardo to me. As the press releases and reviews quoting Knight cryptically remark, he is a singular and “elusive” artist whose work straddles the first and second generations of Institutional Critique. This also explains why he was, and continues to be, an important reference for both Müller and Valentim, who recognize their inscription within the same post-conceptual genealogy that Knight himself helped establish.

Who knows what Knight—who introduces himself as an artist who “lives in Los Angeles and works *in situ*”—would think about this exhibition at Galerie Lars Friedrich titled *Kunst und Freundschaft* that presents the legacy of Institutional Critique, to some extent, as a photo album or a collection of souvenirs? If we take the position that Knight has defended throughout his career—that his work, closely linked to architecture, cannot be understood separate from the context or site in which it was created or conceived, because it would lose its specificity, and thus its meaning—then,

perhaps, one might imagine that his assessment of *Kunst und Freundschaft* would not be positive. This perspective, which merged with what was called “Kontext Kunst” in the 1990s, suggests that a work of art is not reducible to a document (such as a photograph), but rather, that it is a situation created in a specific time and space, which viewers experience for themselves with their own bodies and presence.² Some of Müller’s works act in a similar way, although he has allowed himself the “indulgence” (speaking from the point of view of a certain conceptual “purism”) of producing and exhibiting images that accompany his projects and emancipate them from the site-specificity and complexity of the place. Good examples of this are *Green Border*, his historic project for the 1993 Venice Biennale, *A Balancing Act* (1997), and most recently, *Implementations* (2014).

But what is wrong with showing documentary photographs or small fragments of a past work, such as the tickets for Müller’s performance *Carl Theodors Garten in Düsseldorf-Hellerhof* (1986)? Where is the sin? The conceptual taboo with which these attitudes break is that of the artwork’s autonomy from the market. For example, the distance that Michael Asher imposed between his works and the market is almost legendary. It is as if he was trying to create the—perhaps utopian—conditions for a leftist-materialist practice in the midst of wild California consumerism. Another California artist, even more unfairly ignored and undervalued by institutions and academia, is Maria Nordman, whose radical and incorruptible stance on both the art market and mainstream institutional policies has alienated her from having more visibility (specifically, she has rejected consumerism as the main symptom of an objectifying culture).

This type of attitude is still present, to varying degrees, and the myth (and the desire) to find *the* uncorrupted artist persists; we are enthralled by those who have seemingly managed to escape the market’s clutches and survived to tell the story. On the other hand, the art market seems to have more power than ever, with the astonishing growth of “mega-galleries” and the exhaustive commercialization of everything that artists are capable of producing, including their archives or their presence in different forums and events.

The selection that Müller presents here, made in dialogue with the gallery owners—Lars Friedrich and Inka Meißner—includes pieces made between 1982 and 2021, and could be interpreted as almost a mini-retrospective, turned into an album which mixes works and personal or archival photos, with a special emphasis on “multiple friendships (and betrayals), collaborations, the grey zone of authorship, and where friendship can lead into competition.”³ It also establishes an ambivalent relationship with the photographers of the Düsseldorf School (Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Axel Hütte, Thomas Ruff, and Thomas Struth). Like them, Müller also studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the 1980s, but he uses photography in a different way, resisting giving it a pictorial or monumental meaning. Gursky, in fact, is the author of the pictures used in the folder of Müller’s performance at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (*Kleiner Führer durch die ehemalige Kurfürstliche Gemäldegalerie Düsseldorf*, 1986), and in the invitation and poster produced for his Düsseldorf-Hellerhof performance. They met when they both attended Kasper König’s seminar at the art school. The idea of the “exhibition as a medium”





is another strategy that Müller has used on several occasions, for example in his work *Fixed Values* (1991), which was also conceived as an act of “self-historization,” and which constitutes a clear point of contact with Valentim’s practice.

At the same time, Müller’s proposal is genuine and emotional. The artist shares with us important moments of his life and career, which spans almost four decades. Perhaps the key lies precisely in his ability to maintain the delicate balance between these two poles: sincerity and theatricality, and the emotional distance that irony introduces, along with the generosity of displaying deeply personal materials.

Thus, we find rarely exhibited projects, such as the magazine *Bagatelle* (1982), photographs of the performance *Carl Theodors Garten in Düsseldorf-Hellerhof* (1986), contemporaries of the “gallery talks” that Andrea Fraser began to develop at that same time, or traces of friendships and collaborations which sometimes occurred over very short spans, such as the sound installation *Auftakt*, made with Fareed Armaly in Cologne in 1990. Müller’s work transports us back to a bygone era, reinforcing its historical character. As the artist notes, “The 31-year difference, and our Corona restrictions, make the light and happy chatter of 1990 sound so strange... You can recognize words, and the laughter and socializing, people greeting each other. So different from the social distancing and restrictions we experience now.”⁴ In this room we also find an unpublished diptych of his well-known action in 1993, crossing the borders of the countries surrounding Austria, and documentary photographs of *RESOLUTIONs* (2008), a demonstration-performance inspired by

Öyvind Fahlström’s *Mao-Hope March* (1966), which took place during his exhibition at Galerie Christian Nagel in 2008.

All these works are shown together with other types of materials of a more personal and intimate nature, such as photographs of trips with friends (to Milan, Firminy, and Los Angeles), a sketch of the intervention he made in the Austrian Pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale with Andrea Fraser and Gerald Rockenschaub, and documentation of the gentrification of New York’s Lower East Side, which accompanied the existence of the cooperatively-organized exhibition and event space Orchard (2005–2008), in which Müller participated, together with Rhea Anastas, Moyra Davey, Andrea Fraser, Nicolás Guagnini, Gareth James, Jeff Preiss, R. H. Quaytman, Karin Schneider, Jason Simon, and John Yancy, Jr. The deliberate juxtaposition or confusion of works and documents thus becomes an alternative form of Institutional Critique by questioning the value of both. The similar framing of the works creates a certain homogeneity, the effect of which is a continuous line, and in a way, a whole new work composed of fragments from the past.

Valentim’s proposal is different. From the beginning, he assumes the impossibility of distance from the market, perhaps because that market imposes its own rules with which his work does not always fit, be it the galleries of Manhattan or the conservative tastes of Lisbon. Therefore, his strategy does not consist of resisting its influence through works strictly adapted to the place, but of embracing the market with the intention of sabotaging it with “insincere” projects, in Marcel Broodthaers’s sense of the term. In particular, he accomplishes this through works that explore the

possibilities of storytelling and fiction, reducing their materiality (and their commercial appeal in a conventional sense) to the minimum possible, as is the case with his works *An Exhibition in a Business Card Page* (2017) and *One Thousand Tickets* (2020). The former functions as the excuse for a performance that the artist interprets each time someone requests a guided tour of the exhibition. It unfolds friendships and other social relationships that Valentim has been contending with in his practice for years, engaging in a dialogue with artists such as Aaron Flint Jamison, Alejandro Cesarco, Ana Jotta, David Horvitz, and the Estate of Rosemary Mayer.

One Thousand Tickets refers to typography and design, an interest Valentim shares in common with Müller (who was educated as a designer and practiced in this field before becoming an artist). Its original context was a group of printed works that Valentim made in a print shop near his house in Lisbon, including a piece called *60 Stamps* (2017–2020). Both were supposed to be shown in the fall of 2020 in the oldest shop of collectable postal stamps in Portugal, an opportunity that occurred serendipitously. The site interested the artist as an alternative context to display and eventually sell his work, but the presentation had to be cancelled due to a miscommunication between the person who runs the store and the store's owner. For Valentim, this cancellation ironically echoes the concept behind *One Thousand Tickets*, in which the tickets remain unsold in the midst of the pandemic lockdown, when many museums and galleries have been closed. The one thousand tickets are now being shown at Galerie Lars Friedrich, framed individually, instead of in its original format inside a notebook. In the gallery, they form a sort of strip along the upper part of the walls,

perhaps as a memento of missed encounters with the audience, which, as Valentim like to say, “sometimes is running late.”

Valentim adopts more recognizably “commercial” strategies in works like the carefully staged and produced photograph, *Discover Daniel Buren in Graça* (2020), which alludes to the artist's guided tours of the sites of a disappeared work from 1980 by Buren in his Lisbon neighborhood of Graça. By organizing these tours through the “Airbnb Experiences” platform, just before the first pandemic confinement in March 2020, Valentim consciously, but riskily, approaches advertising codes, for instance, in the stereotyped use of benchmarks of Portuguese hospitality and cuisine, such as *tapas*, as tourist bait. Tourism is indeed a theme present in the work of both artists, and Valentim conceives this project in relation to Müller's “tours” of the late 1980s.

Furthermore, just as Müller attempts to blur the lines between the work and the document, Valentim is committed to weakening the notion of authorship. One work in which the artist questions authorship, is *Stamps and Tickets* (2020), which depicts an anonymously authored illustration of a person engaging in old-fashioned printmaking, signed by the Portuguese artist Ana Jotta at the request of Valentim. Yet, Valentim retains authorship of the work.

Collaboration as a way of redefining the author's position was also the subject of a project in Lisbon at the Gulbenkian Museum, in which Valentim and Jotta joined forces, this time as curators, of the exhibition *from A to C* (2018), in which they showed the work of American artist Al Cartio and the academic Constance Ruth Howes.

Al Cartio is both a pseudonym and an artwork by Jotta, created in 1981, when she submitted a series of drawings under her own name and under the name “Al Cartio” to the drawing biennial Lis'81. Similarly, Constance Ruth Howes is a work Valentim created in 2011 that consists of an academic biography and a business card for a professor at the City University of New York's Graduate Center. His engagement with Howes enables him to comment on the role of academics in legitimating art production. The entire exhibition *from A to C* was conceived as an artwork that happened at a moment in which the Gulbenkian Museum was attempting to merge its collections and redefine a new layout for their exhibition spaces as permanent and temporary galleries. When Valentim and Jotta were approached to do a show at the museum, they thought that the institutional conditions offered to them were perfect to produce an artwork that would negotiate the site where they were invited to present it: a temporary gallery with a set budget, a template for a booklet, and the invitation that Gulbenkian used for all artists who show in that temporary space. According to Valentim and Jotta, this approach was a commentary on the “Macdonaldization” of an institution making shows.⁵

Within this project they published the book *Moer* (“to grind” in Portuguese), a monumental 600-page volume, which uses the design guidelines conceived by Sebastião Rodrigues in the 1960s for the prestigious collection of scientific publications of the Gulbenkian Foundation, dedicated to composing “valid testimonies of uniqueness and authenticity” of Portuguese culture (through disciplines such as law, economics, ethnography, history, and literature).⁶ However, in this case, the artists' content could be defined as both a collection of

individual works by Jotta and Valentim and a chronicle of their friendship since 2011. This gesture was conceived by the artists as an insertion into the publisher's collection and its list of official authors, rather than as an appropriation of its design.

An important fact to bear in mind when browsing the pages of *Moer* is that it was originally conceived as the working dossier of an exhibition of their works at the Gulbenkian Museum that never happened. One of the works included in *Moer* was *from A to C* (mentioned earlier), that was ultimately shown in the museum. The impossibility of carrying out the full show (to a large extent due to the institution's rigid policies) brought the curator Rita Fabiana and the artists to present this dossier (a potential exhibition) in the form of an artist's book (instead of a catalogue) with the critical subtitle “Materials for an Exhibition on Hold.” The book's contents display the dialogue between the practices of Jotta and Valentim, through a minimal layout which eliminates distinctions between works, drawings, projects, personal pictures, letters, postcards, phone messages, screenshots of Instagram accounts, and references to common friends and artists. It thus blurs their individual contributions into a single entity or discourse. On one hand, *Moer* constitutes a precedent of Valentim's present collaboration with Müller, in which the questioning of the hierarchies between works and archival materials (works and non-works) has an important role. On the other, by repeatedly placing his work in relation to other artists, and at the same time questioning the seriousness of the academic procedures and categories of the Gulbenkian Foundation's publishing house, Valentim deconstructs an outdated, essentialist, and conservative idea of identity and authorship.⁷



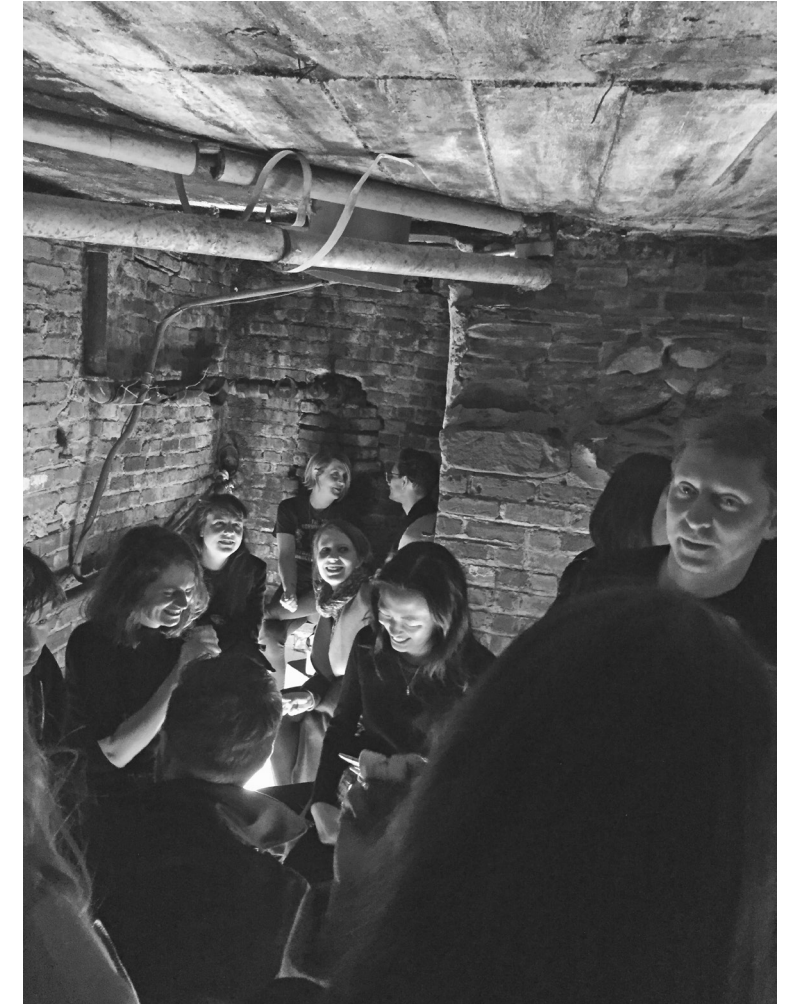
For Valentim, authorship seems to be a sort of fiction of a permanent becoming, or perhaps a performative gesture aimed at decentering the notion of individuality and revealing its constructed nature—a strategy that stems from the work of US artist Sturtevant (1924–2014), in the way she presented and repeated the work of other (famous) artists, in order to consider the conditions in which art was made, distributed, and exhibited. This approach implicated artists, gallerists, and curators, among many other roles in the art world, as being devices for communicating these intentions. In fact, when we look at Valentim’s practice as a whole, the roles and the multiple voices of the artist, the curator, the art historian, and even the dealer and the collector, collapse into one single figure. All of these are enacted by the artist in different and simultaneous moments in real life, as well as in the dispersion of his work in publications and other virtual activities.

Two images that are part of *Kunst und Freundschaft* synthesize many of these issues: friendship, institutional criticism, the art market, the dichotomy between work and document, sincerity, collaborations, vested interests, speculation, enmity, and loneliness. Both images are also photographs of artists made by other artists, presented as artworks in this exhibition. Müller’s work is a series of three images that he captured of artist Andrea Fraser performing the “re-enactment” of her well-known work *May I Help You* (1991) at Orchard Gallery in 2005.⁸ By that time, Müller was documenting as many of Orchard’s activities as possible. One of these photographs, in which we see Fraser speaking in front of a photograph by Louise Lawler (*The Princess, Now the Queen*, 2005), was used by R. H. Quaytman in a 2006 painting extensively titled *Painters Without*

Paintings and Paintings Without Painters, Chapter 8 (Christian Philipp Müller’s Picture of Andrea Fraser Performing May I Help You? at Orchard in Front of Louise Lawler’s Picture of an Andy Warhol Painting), almost as if it was one of the neat titles or statements that accompany Christopher Williams’s photographs. The title was similarly described by art historian Rhea Anastas as “a nesting doll of artistic tradition and inter-artist reception.”⁹

Later, in 2010, Quaytman made a new version of this painting, keeping the cropping of Müller’s original photograph, but modifying the pictorial treatment of the image substantially. She added a new silkscreen layer and renamed the piece with a much more succinct title: *Spine, Chapter 20 [Fraser, Anastas, Lawler]*. The re-editing of her own paintings is a possibility that Quaytman contemplates on certain occasions. She normally tries to avoid it, but reserves the right to do so if a work becomes inaccessible or too expensive to borrow back. When this happens, she introduces a series of alterations that distinguish the first and second editions. However, in this case, the result of this re-titling of new editions is that Müller, the author of the original photograph and colleague of all the artists and writers involved in the genesis of Quaytman’s work, was excluded in the 2010 version of her work.

Valentim’s photograph *Lost in America* (2020) could also be defined by borrowing Anastas’s comment about Quaytman’s title. It shows Müller carefully consulting his cell phone (the main point of contact with our friends during a pandemic), alongside Cameron Rowland’s work *Probability of Escape* (2020) in the group show *Lost in America*, curated by artist John Miller at the Neue Berliner



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Kunstverein in the fall of 2020. Explaining the image, Valentim asserts that “having this work together in the same room as [his other piece] *Discover Daniel Buren in Graça* also offers a context around the history of Institutional Critique—from Buren’s *Affichages Sauvages* in 1968 to Christian’s work in the late 1980s—that concluded with the second wave of Institutional Critique, along with Christian’s peers like Andrea Fraser, Renée Green, Mark Dion, and Fred Wilson in the early 1990s.”¹⁰ Valentim’s comment points to a crucial point in the context of *Kunst und Freundschaft*: the way in which artists establish the meaning of their works in relation to that of other artists, and in the present case, the way in which European artists position themselves in relation to their U.S. colleagues. Valentim’s positioning of Müller alongside the younger Rowland’s work also gestures toward the legacy of Institutional Critique, with a nod to the present.

Both images are representative fragments, or indexes, of the importance that friendship, generosity, the dialogue between artists, and mutual trust still have in an increasingly professionalized and individualistic art world. For Müller, much of an artist’s effort has not so much to do with the production of objects in the studio, as with care and affection, what he calls “the social glue.” An issue that has been present in his practice since its inception is what Frederik Leen has referred to as his “intersubjective activity.”¹¹ Or, put another way, the constant need to weave links between artists and other agents in the art world—links that also include common interests and conflicts—of which his commitment to the Orchard project was an example.¹² This is similar to the project undergroundbarbar, an illegal bar organized by Valentim along with

artists Ethan Breckenridge, Rita Sobral Campos, and Viola Yeşiltaç, which existed in a basement at 130 W. 18th Street, in Manhattan, between 2015 and 2018.

If a pure, disinterested, and fragile feeling, such as friendship, condemned to suffer and deteriorate in a competitive, polarized, sectarian, and egotistical society, cannot be considered a “work of art”—in the sense of a rarity, a jewel, or a treasure—we can at least admit, as Christian Philipp Müller and Ricardo Valentim seem to suggest, that it constitutes an essential ingredient in the process that leads to them.

- 1 A sousaphone is a brass instrument related to the tuba that is often used in marching bands.
- 2 Philipp Kaiser, “Müller’s Worlds,” in *Christian Philipp Müller*, exh. cat. (Basel: Museum für Gegenwartkunst, 2007), 9.
- 3 Email from Christian Philipp Müller to the author, April 1, 2021.
- 4 Whatsapp conversation between Christian Philipp Müller and the author, March 22, 2021.
- 5 Email from Ricardo Valentim to the author, March 15, 2021.
- 6 “Testemunhos válidos da singularidade e da autenticidade da nossa cultura...” Description of the book series “Cultura Portuguesa” (Portuguese Culture) of the Editions of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.
- 7 Ana Jotta and Ricardo Valentim, *Moer* (Lisbon: Fundação Gulbenkian, 2018).
- 8 It is also interesting to note a certain parallelism between the almost schizophrenic effect that Andrea Fraser’s performance delivers in this piece—going through the identities of different people, from a high society collector to a timid working-class woman—might have with the role-playing attitude that characterizes Valentim’s practice at large.
- 9 Rhea Anastas, “Property and Community in the Recent Work,” in *Louise Lawler: Receptions*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2017), 35.
- 10 Email from Ricardo Valentim to the author, March 15, 2021.
- 11 Frederik Leen, “Subject and Identity in the Work of Christian Philipp Müller and some Motifs by Walter Benjamin,” *Forum International*, no. 11 (January 1992): 41–48.
- 12 Another precedent would be Müller’s 1992 exhibition *A Sense of Friendliness, Mellowness, and Permanence* at American Fine Arts, Co. (New York).





WHERE IS THE AUDIENCE?

Inka Meißner

Ricardo Valentim's *Eighteen People* offers unique insight into the preoccupations of *Kunst und Freundschaft*, a dual exhibition by the artist and Christian Philipp Müller. The work consists of invitation cards that Valentim mailed to a group of friends and acquaintances, inviting them to a two-part film screening he presented in his Brooklyn studio in the spring of 2018. The screening program included film works the artist had produced between 2005 and 2011, including the first 16mm films he made after moving to New York in 2004, *O Outro Lado do Uso* (The Other Side of Use, 2005), and *Floating Island* (2005), as well as one of the film reels from his three-reel work *Standard Gauge* (2006–2011).

The screenings also included his two-part film *Inkblot Perception and Personality (Form A)* and *(Form B)* (2009–2011), shown for the second time since its first presentation at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in 2012. Valentim's protocol for screening the film's two parts required presenting the second part one month after showing the first. As an integral component of these two events, he invited Jeff Preiss, a figure associated with New York's contemporary art and film scene, to introduce each of the screenings. This essentially functioned as a gesture to legitimize a film program screened in the informal, non-institutional space of an artist's studio. (And, by coincidence, Preiss was also a collaborator of Müller in running the artist-organized space Orchard Gallery from 2005–2008.)

Eighteen People comprises four cards mounted within a passepartout and framed. The four cards represent the two invitation cards, displayed recto and verso. Onto the passepartout, Valentim has handwritten the number of people in attendance at each screening (ten at the first and eight at the second, so eighteen in total). The artist refers to these viewers as his "primary audience." He also enables a secondary audience to see these elements constituting the film program as an artwork that he produced in his studio in cooperation with his social circle. Who is this primary audience that is both relatively limited and intimate, and how does it compare to the larger, more anonymous masses who usually turn up to observe such historical events? In *Eighteen People*, the audiences of the two programs were not aware that the screening's setting was to become a piece, which is being shown for the first time in *Kunst und Freundschaft*. In part, Valentim's move derives its impulse from one of the artist's earlier and ongoing works, *Film Festival* (2006–), a series of film screenings and related printed matter, which considers the site of a film festival as the framework for a piece. But more broadly, it is also indebted to the legacies of conceptual art and the dematerialization of the art object. Indeed, the retroactive transformation of an action into an object-form is reminiscent of David Hammons's *Bliz-aard Ball Sale* from 1983, in which the artist sold meticulously formed snowballs placed on a rug on the sidewalk of New York's Cooper Square one winter day after a blizzard. Unannounced and unmarked as art or performance, Hammons interacted with an audience that consisted only of those who randomly passed by and the few who actually stopped to purchase one of the balls (for sale at the bargain basement price of just one US dollar). Hammons only later circulated the

photographs taken of the event by his friend Dawoud Bey, thus penetrating the system of the field of art, which promptly historicized, indexed, and ultimately valorized the work within the rubrics of conceptual and performance art.

With *Eighteen People*, the primary audience saw the work as the artist was making it in his studio. Hence, the aesthetic object of the primary audience's production is fundamentally characterized by a mode of documentation, though it is reflected in many formats and effects. In that sense, the primary audience is part of a blending of productive and reproductive forms of labor; it is the gaze that we depend on and that depends on us to see things, and to be seen.

Eighteen People also articulates the idea that the relationship between an artist and their primary audience usually runs on friendship before it runs on money. Situated within practices explicitly occupied with criticizing art institutions, and sometimes organizing spaces as alternatives to these institutions, artworld friendships start as the interdependencies we enter into voluntarily and that become a crucial infrastructure for us all. But those interdependencies are not necessarily less haunting than those we are born into; for when art practices and objects are touched by the market processes of value generation and accumulation and become capital of one form or the other, the playful role-reversing relationship between the primary audience and the artist is at risk of a crisis. After invoking the domain of economics, *Kunst und Freundschaft* enters into the psychological realm. The genres in which this plays out are the tragicomedy, the comedy drama, the social drama, and

in some cases, Hitchcock's brand of the psycho-thriller, making art and friendship a libidinal economy par excellence. Exemplifying these phenomena, are Müller's photographs of Andrea Fraser reenacting her performance *May I Help You?* (originally from 1991), in front of works by Louise Lawler and Allan McCollum (among others), at Orchard Gallery on May 19th, 2005, which he originally took as one of the gallery's producers/hosts/curators/artists.

Three other photographic images further delve into the social processes of intimacy and distancing that have taken place between Müller and others over more than thirty years while at the same time heralding in the beginning of something new in the artist's oeuvre: the release of formerly undefined documents as artworks. *Brutalism I* (1992), *Brutalism II* (2020), and *Gift from Ricardo Valentim* (2021) mark the epilogue of Müller's chronological review in *Kunst und Freundschaft*. *Brutalism I* (1992), an original black-and-white print depicting the artist Tom Burr, is the smallest of the three images. Müller took the photograph during a research trip for the group show *Unité*, that opened in the spring of 1993. The backdrop is the Maison de la Culture et de la Communication de Firminy (France), a work of Brutalist architecture planned by Le Corbusier in 1956, but only realized right before his death in 1965. The image presents Burr at a decisive moment in his artistic trajectory from the relatively innocent perspective of friendship, at a moment marking the early stage of his career as an artist; Burr stands on one side of a bridge that is yet to be traversed, but we do not know which rift is to be crossed, nor where the bridge is actually leading.

Müller's *Brutalism II* (2020) depicts Flora, the museum restaurant of New York's Met Breuer. Designed by architect Marcel Breuer from 1964–1966, the building housed The Whitney Museum of American Art from 1966–2016, when it moved to its new Renzo Piano-designed downtown Manhattan location. Since that time, the Breuer Building became a branch of The Metropolitan Museum of Art for four years, and since March 2021, it has become the temporary home of The Frick Collection (now known as Frick Madison). The image's fore- and middle-grounds are replete with people sitting at tables, with the museum's "sculpture garden," a Brutalist terrace visible outside the floor-to-ceiling glass windows behind them. The background outside the windows provides a glimpse of another seemingly interrupted bridge—the concrete walkway of Breuer's architecture—traversing the terrace below, which is punctuated by pieces of generic outdoor furniture. (This sunken concrete patio was also the same site where in 2002 Burr presented *Deep Purple*, a violet-painted plywood remake of Richard Serra's infamous *Tilted Arc*.)

The formal relations between *Brutalism I* and *II* are obvious: they culminate in the metaphor of the broken bridge. Personal feelings and architecture enter into a supplementary relationship that could very well serve as a blueprint for the possible narrative arcs of *Kunst und Freundschaft*. But the third photograph in the series offers a new direction: *Gift from Ricardo Valentim* (2021)—an image of a card bearing the line, "Sometimes the audience is running late," given by Valentim to Müller as a friendly token of their shared sense of humor—which can be read as an attempt at making peace,

moving on, and focusing on what is in the making, instead of what is in the past.

Ultimately, *Kunst und Freundschaft* invokes encounters of intellectual and/or emotional intimacy that have disappeared into artefacts of public knowledge. What remains is an absent sequence and an enduring loss. Witnessing and participating in this process is actually a form of reproductive labor, and thus, the task of the primary audience. But what this exhibition also offers to the secondary audience are the structural conditions of artistic production, those based on the relationship between the artists themselves, as well as between the artists and their audiences and the institutions that present them. Some have called this context; I would call it inter-relationality.

What happens when you think about friendship as the infrastructure undergirding the self-organized contexts within art or as the system of care of your own self-made institution? Friendship is deeply intertwined with an artwork once it appears on the public scene where it meets the audience, whether it is explicitly articulated or not, and whether its production is considered in the distribution logic of the artwork's possible surplus value or not. The ongoing pandemic, the lockdowns, and many art institutions' current attempts to present art in the digital sphere, have also forced us to become hyper aware—as artists and gallerists—of our inter-dependence with the audience. Eighteen people in the gallery at once would be fantastic.

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10.



CHRISTIAN PHILIPP MÜLLER

Auftakt (detail), 1990
Edition with Fareed Armaly
Silkscreen print, 21 × 29,7 cm

Augen auf, 2011–2021
Digital c-print, 42,3 × 35,9 cm

Brutalism I, Le Corbusier, 1992
Gelatin silver print, 41 × 36,5 cm

Brutalism II, Marcel Breuer, 2020
Digital c-print, 42,5 × 32 cm

*Cinema seats, dedicated to R.S.,
Installation Theatergarten Bestiarium,
PS1 New York*, 1989
Gelatin silver print, 35 × 40,5 cm

Cookie-Cutter, 2008
Edition with Luc Derycke
Offset print, signed, 72 × 103 cm

Flyer of the Cover of Bagatelle, 1982
Photo by Walter Pfeiffer
Duplex print, offset print, dedication,
44,5 × 30,5 cm

Gertel's Bakery, Maxwell, 2006–2021
Digital c-print, 32,5 × 42,5 cm

Gift from Ricardo Valentim, 2021
Digital c-print, gilded frame,
25 × 19 cm

Goethe in Düsseldorf Hellerhof, 1986
Three gelatin silver prints,
72,5 × 40,5 cm

Green Border, 1993
Ball pen on xerox print,
31,5 × 43,5 cm

I don't give a Rat's Ass, 2014–2021
Digital c-print, 32 × 22 cm

*Illegal Border Crossing between
Austria and Germany*, 1993
Two c-prints, 47 × 58 cm

Joseph Beuys/Arnold Bode, 2012
C-print, embossed print, gilded
frame, 31,5 × 32,5 cm

Kasperletheater, 2021
Wood, lacquer, audio file,
130 × 70 × 23 cm

La Boutonnière, (green: Oscar), 2015
C-print, 36,5 × 34,5 cm

La Boutonnière, (red: Lech), 2015
C-print, 36,5 × 34,5 cm

Milano I, Pasqua 1987, 1987
Photo by Lukas Duwenhögger
Gelatin silver print, 35,5 × 31 cm

Milano II, Lukas Duwenhögger, 1987
Gelatin silver print, 35 × 40,5 cm

Orchard, May 19th, 2005, (I–III),
2005–2021
Three digital c-prints, individually
framed, 36 × 42 cm (each)

Portfolio Bagatelle, 1982–2021
Photo by Walter Pfeiffer
Digital c-print, 45 × 59,5 cm

RESOLUTIONs, 2008–2021
Five digital c-prints, announcement
card (offset print), 60,5 × 53,2 cm

St. Etienne – Mon Bonheur!, 1989
Gelatin silver print, 35 × 40,5 cm

The Fundraiser, 2015
C-print, 139 × 100 cm

8 Tickets, 1986
Letterpress print, 37 × 36 cm

RICARDO VALENTIM

*An Exhibition in a Business Card
Page*, 2017
Plastic sleeve with twelve elements
(offset print, thermographic print,
rubber stamp print, engraved print,
letterpress print, marker pen), press
release and checklist (digital xerox
print), announcement card (offset
print), and embossed folder, variable
dimensions

Discover Daniel Buren in Graça,
2020
Digital c-print, 101 × 81 cm

Eighteen People, 2018
Four announcement cards (offset
print), pencil on artist's frame,
67,3 × 57,2 cm

Kunst und Freundschaft, 2021
Exhibition booklet and
announcement card (offset print),
variable dimensions

Lost in America, 2020
Digital c-print, 101 × 81 cm

One Thousand Tickets, 2020
One hundred movable type
prints on perforated carbonless
paper, individually framed, variable
dimensions (according to space)

Stamps and Tickets, 2020
Photolithography on aluminum plate,
(CTF) technology, storage gum,
37,5 × 45,5 cm



1. Christian Philipp Müller and Warren Niesluchowski at the exhibition *Cookie-Cutter*, Orchard, New York, January–February 2008. Photograph by John Yancy, Jr.

2. Airbnb experience, *Discover Daniel Buren in Graça*, Lisbon, February–March 2020. Photograph by Ricardo Valentim.

3. Christian Philipp Müller, *Illegal Border Crossing between Austria and Germany*, 1993.

4. Afterparty, *An Exhibition in a Business Card Page*, undergroundbarbar, New York, March 3, 2017. Photograph by Ricardo Valentim.

5. Christian Philipp Müller, *Brutalism I, Le Corbusier*, 1992.

6. Christian Philipp Müller, *Brutalism II, Marcel Breuer*, 2020.

7. Ricardo Valentim, *Lost in America*, 2020.

8. Christian Philipp Müller performing a tour of the exhibition *Kunst und Freundschaft*, Galerie Lars Friedrich, Berlin, April–June 2021. Photograph by Lars Friedrich.

9. Film program introduced by Jeff Preiss, Ricardo Valentim studio, New York, February 26, 2018. Photograph by Ricardo Valentim.

10. Film program introduced by Jeff Preiss, second part, Ricardo Valentim studio, New York, March 26, 2018. Photograph by Ricardo Valentim.

11. Christian Philipp Müller, *Kleiner Führer durch die ehemalige Kurfürstliche Gemäldegalerie Düsseldorf* (detail), 1986. Collection of Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich.

This booklet is published in conjunction with the exhibition

KUNST UND FREUNDSCHAFT

Christian Philipp Müller and Ricardo Valentim

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