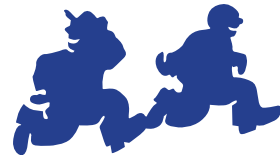


KP Brehmer *Best, Good, Uncertain, Troubled*



Weiss Falk Zurich
Sonneggstrasse 82
8006 Zurich
Switzerland

KP Brehmer *Best, Good, Uncertain, Troubled*

10.06.–23.07.2022

Weiss Falk Zurich

Galerie Weiss Falk is pleased to present *Best, Good, Uncertain, Troubled*, our second show of works by KP Brehmer (1938–1997). The exhibition title is drawn from a 1970/71 work that epitomizes Brehmer's artistic project of "*Sichtagitation*" (visual agitation) in the 1960s and '70s: to analyze and visualize social realities created by the capitalist economic order in West Germany and around the globe. For his *Investment Climate*, Brehmer, a trained lithographer, appropriated a map of South America from *Time* magazine and color-coded it according to investment criteria in order to expose its underlying abstract colonial mindset. The exhibition covers works ranging from his first participation in group shows to his professorship at Hamburg's Hochschule für bildende Künste.

The exhibition begins in the gallery's foyer with footage of the opening of an early solo show at Galerie René Block, the same West Berlin gallery that put together the legendary 1964 group exhibition *Neodada. Pop. Decollage. Capitalist Realism*, in which Brehmer's works had been shown to the public for the first time. His oeuvre and the discourse around Capitalist Realism – in which conceptual practices informed by Marxist sociology fused with pop art – have undergone a revival in recent years owing to numerous exhibitions, articles and studies.

The artists who'd grown up under the Nazi dictatorship countered the "esoteric formal gimmicks" of Art Informel that were popular at the time with an overtly political, anti-subjectivist visual language and an earnest effort to come to grips with recent German history. *Hommage à Lidice*, an action coordinated by René Block in 1967, is a case in point. As part of an international initiative to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Lidice massacre by the Nazis, he called on artists to donate works to the museum that was planned for the rebuilt Czech village.

Along with *Korrektur der Nationalfarben (Correction of the National Colors)*, *Briefmarken (Stamps)* is the best known of his early works, which mostly consisted of prints. Brehmer enlarged these subliminally effective carriers of nation-states' iconographic programs and their ideological underpinnings. The series was iterated in various forms: as inflatables, bags of assorted stamps, larger-than-life envelopes and album pages. He added motifs to some of the stamps and postmarks, and printed some of them in very coarse halftones.

By the mid-1960s, after various unlimited-edition series such as *Trivialgrafik (Trivial Graphic Art)* and *Aufsteller (Displays)*, Brehmer had come to the conclusion that the utopia of mass-reproduced art could not be achieved in the existing art system. This utopia was the talk of the left-wing scene, especially after Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* was published in 1963 by edition suhrkamp.

Brehmer started to make "complicated print variations, varying print runs, both stamped and unstamped, false colors etc. that delighted collectors of stamps and prints alike". And yet he was constantly undermining those traditional bourgeois collector categories by means of misprints, offprints, press proofs and misleading print-run claims. Brehmer produced most of his prints on a printing press in his Berlin apartment, including the elaborate perforations along the edges of the stamps. He mirrored the apparatus of industrial printing in a kind of mimicry – Brehmer himself spoke of "kleptomaniac" methods. The technical and material processes in his work always have a semantic dimension. In *Trivialgrafik*, for example, he used preexisting *clichés* (printing plates), elements drawn from the real-world commercial production of his age, which he obtained from printing shops he knew from his days as an apprentice.

In the early '70s, Brehmer switched to large formats and became deeply interested in color associations. *Farbmuster Klassische Skala (Classic Range Color Sample, 1969)* features Corinthian columns printed in various earth tones. Below them is a color scale giving the name of each tone. The arrangement produces a narrative from green to waste-land brown and, in consequence, a gamut of political connotations. In *Farbengeografien (Color Geographies)*, the series that includes the above-mentioned *Investment Climate*, Brehmer appropriated graphic representations drawn from social research and geography and addressed what he called the "visualization problem." *Farbengeografie 6*, for instance, is a map of France broken down by the phenotypic trait of hair color, and *Farbengeografie 5* a world map with a coordinate system in which various types of vegetation are translated into color values with botanical names. These cartographic representations admit of a wide range of geopolitical and sociopolitical readings, and call the positivistic sciences into question.

BREHMER



CABINET RENÉ BLOCK

**Grafisches Kabinett
der Freien Galerie**

BERLIN

**Kurfürstenstr. 149 III Tel. 13 45 49
29.April-31.Mai 1964 tägl.13-18Uhr**

*Brehmer at Cabinet René Block 1964, 1964
Exhibition poster*

Graphik des Kapitalistischen Realismus

Brehmer Hödicke Lueg Polke Richter Vostell



Samstag, 14. Okt. 1967, zwischen 11 u. 12 Uhr (Antwerpen, Hotel Diana; rechts Polke, links Richter)

Eröffnung: Sonntag, 6. Mai 1990, 11 Uhr. Ausstellungsdauer: 6. Mai bis 19. Mai 1990.
Gleichzeitig 257./258. Bilderwahl mit Arbeiten von: I. Barfuss, M. Dumas, B. Ecker,
R. Hausmann, S. Kaden, J. Knap, W. Maywald, O. Metzel, W. Polzenhagen,
A.-B. Rhaue, A. P. Weber

griffelkunst

Hamburg-Langenhorn, Timmerlich 29, Fritz-Schumacher-Schule
Öffnungszeiten: dienstags bis sonntags 10–13 und 15–18.30 Uhr, sonntags 10–13 und 15–18 Uhr,
montags geschlossen.

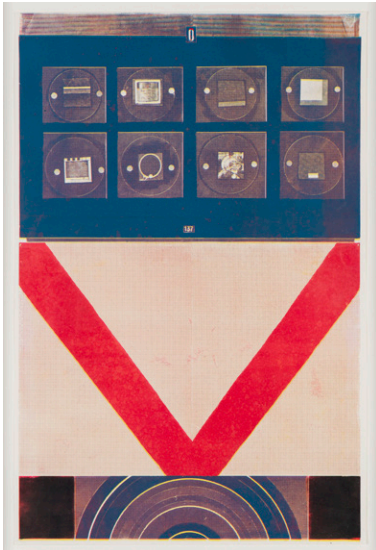
© Ostermuck



*Opening at Galerie René Block, 1967
Digitalized film
8'44"*

*Graphik des Kapitalistischen Realismus, 1990
Exhibition poster*

Cliché print 13, 1965
Cliché print on paper
50 × 34 cm
Ed. of 1000



Untitled, 1965
Cliché print on paper
50 × 33 cm
Ed. of 5



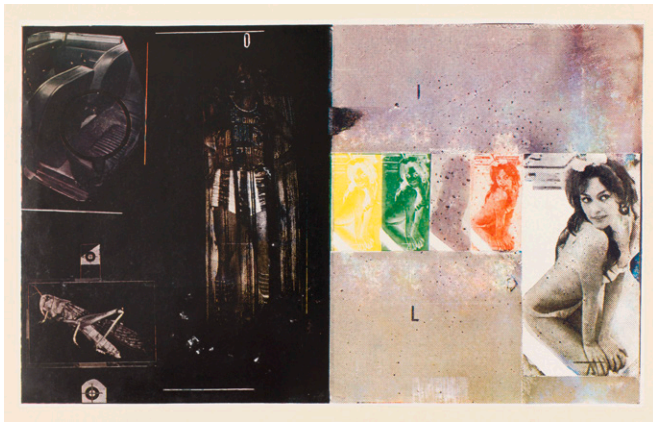
Untitled, 1965
Cliché print on paper
45.5 × 50 cm
Ed. of 1000



Untitled, 1965
Cliché print on paper
73 × 64 cm
Ed. of 1000



Untitled, 1965
Cliché print on paper
49.5 × 44 cm
Ed. of 1000



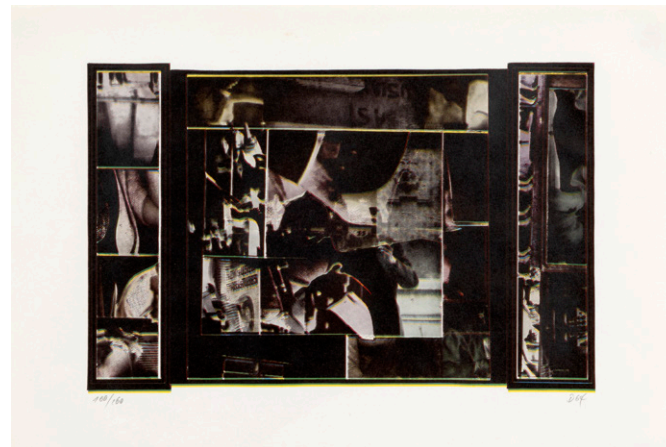
Untitled, 1965
Cliché print on paper
40 x 60 cm
Ed. 2/10



Untitled, 1964
Cliché print on paper
60 x 40 cm
Ed. 1/4



Untitled, 1965
Cliché print on paper
65.5 x 49.8 cm
Ed. 1/3



Untitled, 1964
Cliché print on paper
40 x 60 cm
Ed. 160/260

After his apprenticeship as a reprographic technician and a series of early etchings and early photomechanical printing experiments, Brehmer began making cliché prints in 1964. He deliberately used the democratic production process of printing to reveal social mechanisms and to subvert the strategies of the commercial art market: what counted was not the original but only its duplicated copy, be it a postcard mailed in large numbers, a multiple, or an inexpensive print on paper. The main idea behind this was that reproducing material that had already been (publicly) reproduced, in the form of trivial motifs from the consumer world (pin-ups, pictures of astronauts or sportspeople, images of current events from newspapers and magazines), can be used to highlight the corruptibility and artificiality of everyday visual worlds. For the prints, Brehmer used existing photographic cliché plates that he constantly rearranged, sometimes bringing out specific motifs by enlargement or pixelation. Many of these prints, whose collage-like aesthetic recalls early graphic works by Robert Rauschenberg, were exhibited by Brehmer in 1965 under the title "Trivialgrafik" (Trivial Graphics) at René Block's gallery in Berlin.



Series I (Art Postcards), 1964-66
 Postcards in envelope
 16 x 11.5
 Ed. of 1500



Untitled, 1960s
 Cliché print on cardboard
 7 x 5 x 2 cm



Display 13, 1965
 Cliché print on paper
 27 x 21 cm



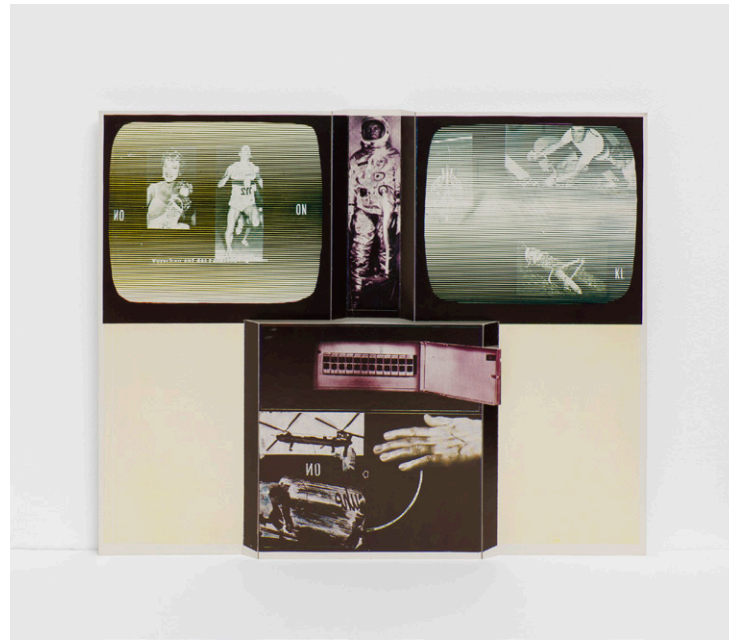
Fräulein Liebschen, 1968
 Cliché print on plastic, straw
 25 x 25 cm





Untitled, 1965
Cliché print on cardboard, laminated
64 x 50 x 5 cm
Ed. 250

*Aufsteller 25 „Das Gefühl zwischen Fingerkuppen...
(Display 25. Feeling between Fingertips), 1967*
Silkscreen on cardboard, seed bags
60 x 36 x 10 cm
Ed. 120



Untitled, 1965
Cliché print on cardboard, laminated
50 x 62.5 x 4.5 cm
Ed. 250



"The Display is a stock component of a staged world of mere appearances. My work on images is shaped more by the films and novels of Romy de Hellebrant than by American POP ART."

Possibility is stronger than reality. Kleist*
- KP Brehmer

In his work, Brehmer reflected the everyday visual world of West Germany shaped by ubiquitous advertising and state propaganda. One seductive phenomenon connected with the huge economic growth of the period was the colorful consumer aesthetic of the advertising industry, whose widely reproduced images accompanied and promoted the industrial production of everyday consumer items. In a series of cliché prints, Brehmer engaged critically with the way images of women are used in advertising. Modeled on the advertising displays commonly installed as promotional tools on bars and near checkouts, he created complex "Aufsteller" (displays) with female figures, folded out of printed sheets. In this way, he highlighted the strategies of the advertising industry that exploits eroticism and tactility, pushing commodity fetishism to extremes by presenting the object of consumer desire in the display as an untouchable object, as in "Aufsteller 25. Das Gefühl zwischen den Fingerkuppen" (Display 25. Feeling between Fingertips, 1967), which is given a cuttingly ironic tone by the addition of cucumber and carrot seeds.



Portrait Graziella I, 1967
Cliché print on cardboard, cotton balls and plastic
100 × 85 × 5 cm

From 1966, parallel to the Trivial Graphics, Brehmer developed a group of works using postage stamps, which, as symbols of the nation state and a typical focus for the bourgeois passion for collecting, offered the ideal basis for critical engagement with the past present of German society. Using enlargements, overprinting, and altered motifs, he demonstrated not only the propaganda function of postage stamps (including Hitler stamp from the Nazi period) but also their auratic impact.. Between 1966 and 1972 the artist made around fifty different postage stamps, in various sizes and using various techniques, as single motifs or in series, as "album pages" on soft PVC film or in so called "Auswahlbeutel" (assortments). Works of this kind were first shown in May 1967 at René Block gallery in Berlin. By contrasting postage stamps from different political systems and historical periods, such as East and West Germany, and by inventing fictitious stamps like the West German stamp with the head of the socialist Ernst Thälmann, or the portrait of Lenin on a stamp marked "République Française," Brehmer demonstrated the ideological corruptibility of popular mass media. In the 1960s, he took the most common stamp motifs, including the Brandenburger Gate, Cologne Cathedral, or great German figures like Dürer or Goethe, and presented them in an inflatable assortment bag ironically labeled "German Values." After German Reunification, Brehmer reworked many series especially filling the bags with East German motifs, adding a sticker saying "Billiger DM -,99" (Cheaper DM 0.99), thus documenting the demises and sellout of the socialist countries.



German Values (Assortment Envelope), 1966
plastic bag, cliché print on paper, cardboard
78 x 47 cm



Sonderangebot (Special Offer), 1967/1990
Cliché print on paper
85 x 65 cm





Deutsche Werte Mappe / German Values (Assortment Envelope), 1967
Cliché prints on paper and plastic
67 x 50 cm
Ed. 12 + 1 AP

Stamp album for the series „Stamps“, 1967
Acrylic on plastic
4 parts, each 157 x 113 cm





Austria, 1966
Cliché print on paper
47.5 × 34.5 cm



Goethe, 1967
Cliché print on paper
52 × 32.5 cm
Ed. of 30



CSSR, 1967
Cliché print on foil
31 × 47 cm



R.A.D., 1968
Cliché print on cardboard
38 × 64.5 cm
Ed. 40/100



U.S. Air, 1969
Cliché print on foil
43 × 33.5 cm



GRUENE
ERDE IMIT.



UMBRA
CYPR.NAT.



ERDE
GEBRANNT



CAPUT
MORTUUM

Color Sample Classic Scale, 1969
Cliché print on plastic, two parts
180 x 220 cm

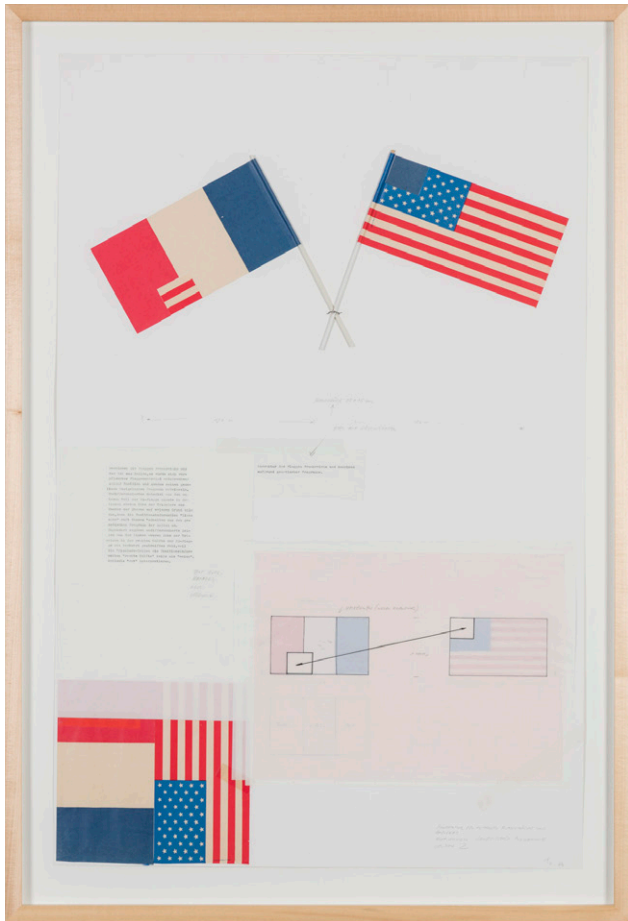


*Correction of the Flags of France and America on
the Basis of Genetic Programs (Version 2), 1970*
Fabric, two parts
145 x 90 cm; 146 x 96 cm



Farbtest „Schwarz-Rot-Gold“, 1970-1972
 Pencil, acrylic, negative film, needles on graph paper
 97 x 69 cm





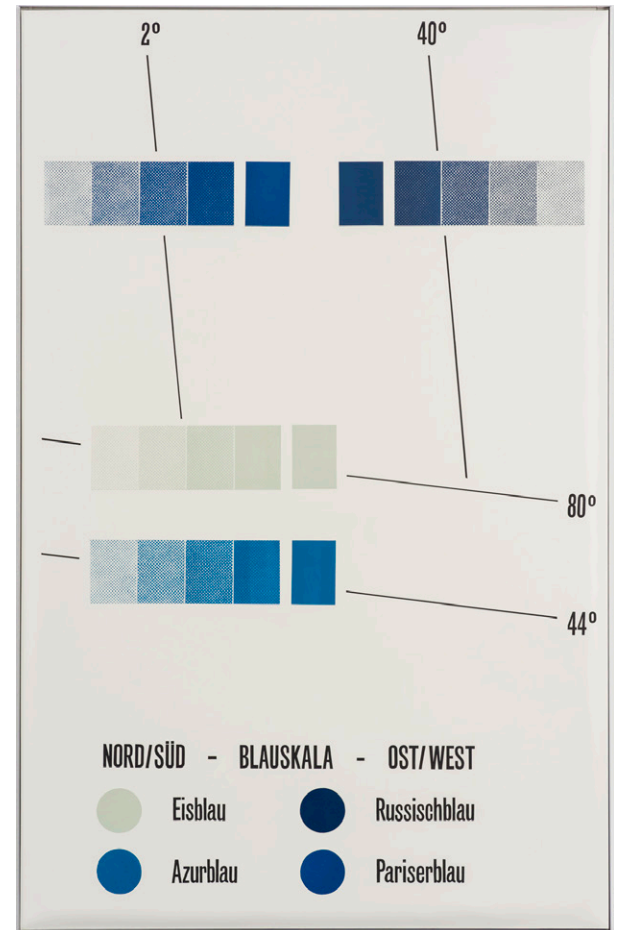
Correction of the Flags of France and America on the Basis of Genetic Programs (Version 2), 1980
Mixed media on paper
96.7 x 65 cm



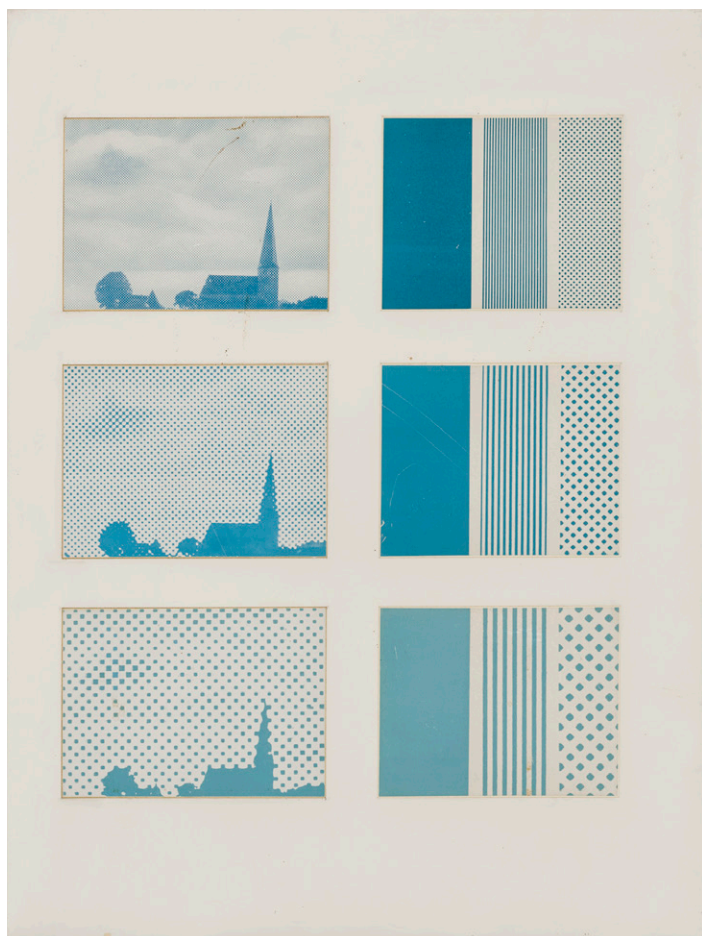
bestimmen die Flaggen-Prozeduren und der ist nur Teil, so würde sich ver-
pflichtetes Flaggenmaterial entsprechen
einer Position und ebenso seinen gene-
tischen festgelegten Programmen entsprechen.
Differenziertes Material aus dem un-
teren Teil der US-Flagge müsste in der
linken oberen Ecke der Triangulare das
Muster der Sterne auf weißem Grund bil-
den, denn die Positionsinformation "linker
oben" mit dieser "Verhalten" aus dem ge-
netischen Programm der selben ab.
Sommerzeit ergeben undifferenzierte Zei-
chen aus der linken oberen Ecke der Tri-
angulare in der rechten Hälfte der US-Flagge
ein korrekt gestricheltes Feld, weil
die Triangulare-Teil die Positionsinfor-
mation "rechte Hälfte" teils als "weiß",
teils als "rot" interpretieren.

Korrektur der Flaggen-Prozeduren und Ausrichtung
aufgrund genetischer Programme.

Teil 2/11
Korrig



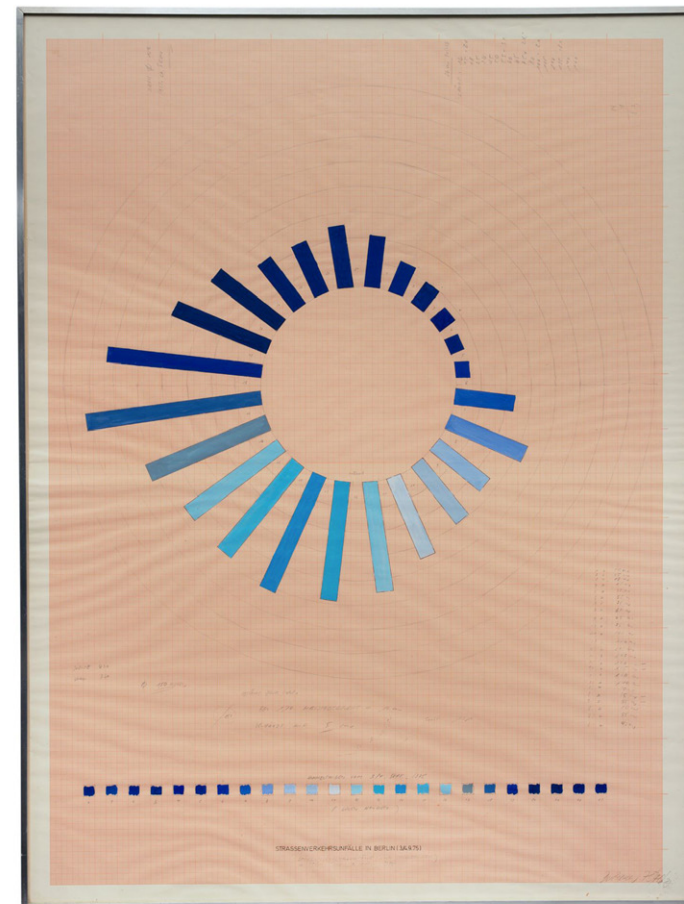
Blue Scale II, 1969
 Acrylic on plastic
 180 x 116 cm



Blue Scale, 1969
 Cliché print on plastic
 82,5 × 60 × 2 cm
 Ed. of 12

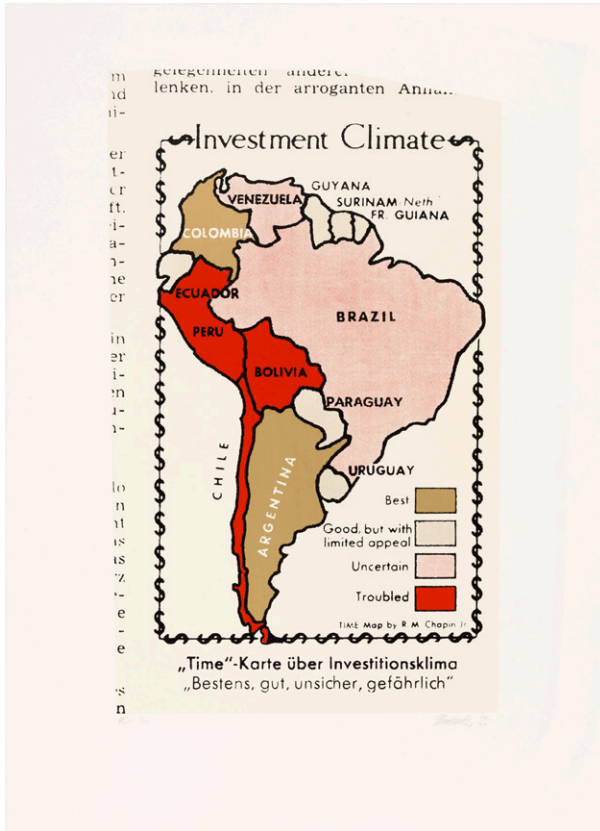


Untitled, 1975
 Dispersion on canvas
 155.5 × 10.5 cm



Verkehrsunfälle (Traffic accidents), 1975
 Gouache on paper
 79 × 59 cm

In the „Color Geographies“, Brehmer used the graphical format of the kind of political maps commonly used in scientific publications and the popular press to convey information, a format whose objective-scientific appearances makes an ideal medium for spreading political and ideological messages driven by specific interests. With their explicit legends and arbitrary assignment of colors, the „Color Geographies“ render visible the propaganda dimension of such supposedly empirical and objective visualizations.

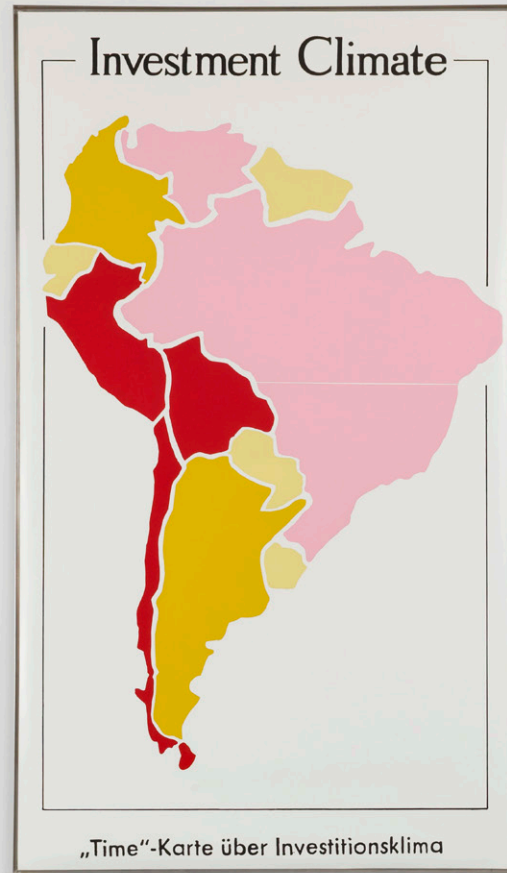


Color Geography 2, 1970
Location of Shades of Golden Yellow – Red

Investment climate map for South America,
found in TIME Magazine (1970)

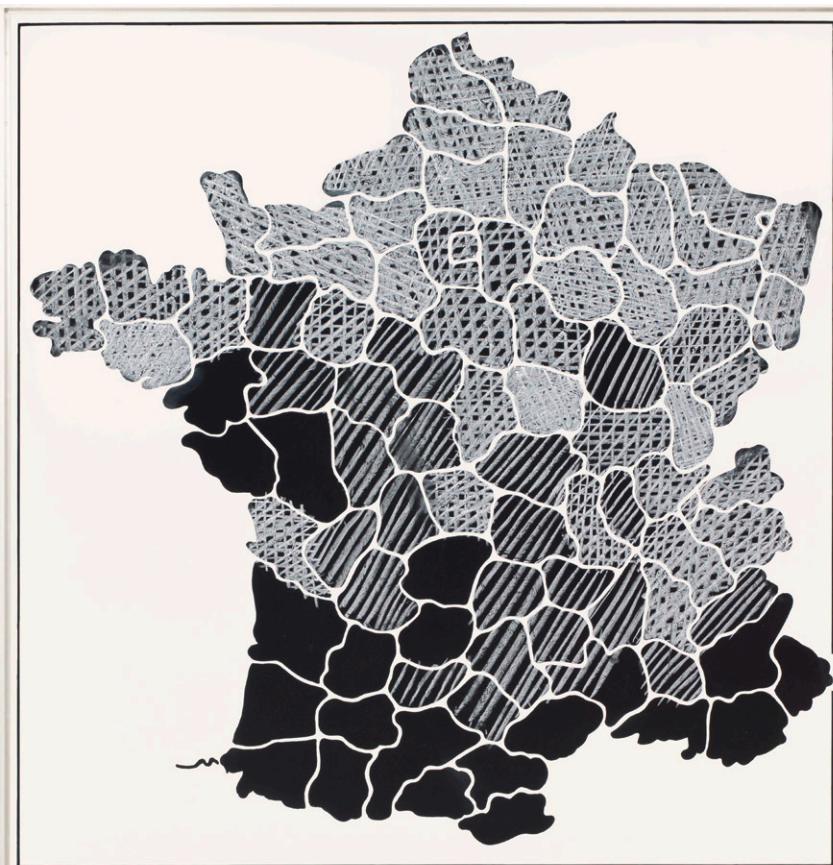
"Color scheme altered; in the original the areas imperialism are marked in golden-yellow, states with a socialist tendency in red."

- KP Brehmer



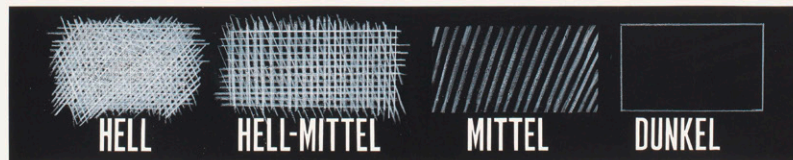
Investment Climate, 1970/71
Acrylic on plastic foil, two parts
200 x 114 cm; 80 x 115 cm





FARBENGEOGRAPHIE 6
HAARFARBEN IN FRANKREICH

JAHR 1941



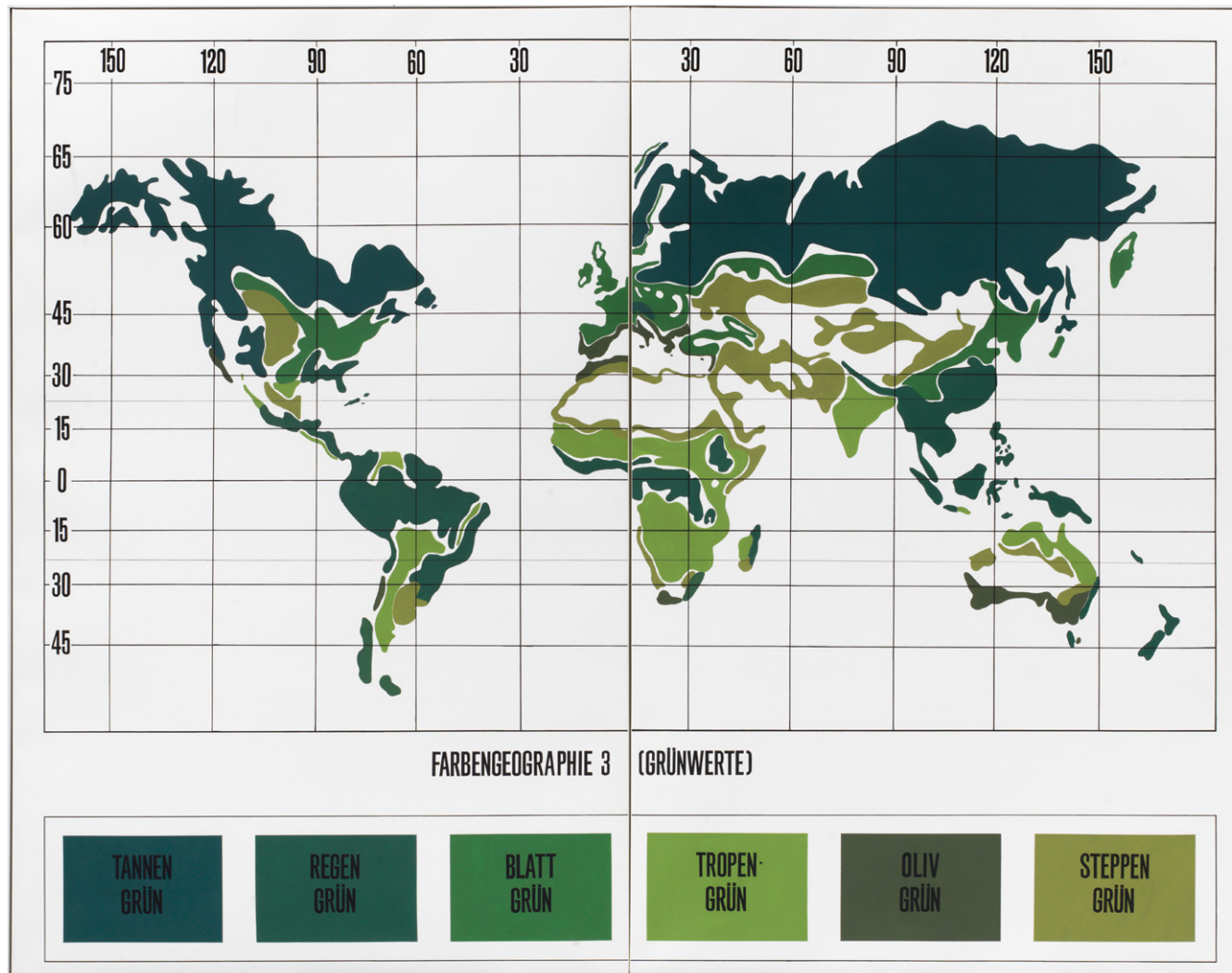
Color Geography 6, 1972
Location of Gray / Black
Hair colors in France

„Seen in a schoolbook from 1941. So-called „racial traits“ such as hair color were localized in order to validate a claim to power based on Nazi race theory.

The presentation is variable and can be altered as new statistics emerge.

- KP Brehmer

Color Geography 6, Hair Colors in France, 1971
Emulsion paint and chalk on PVC film
200 x 115 cm



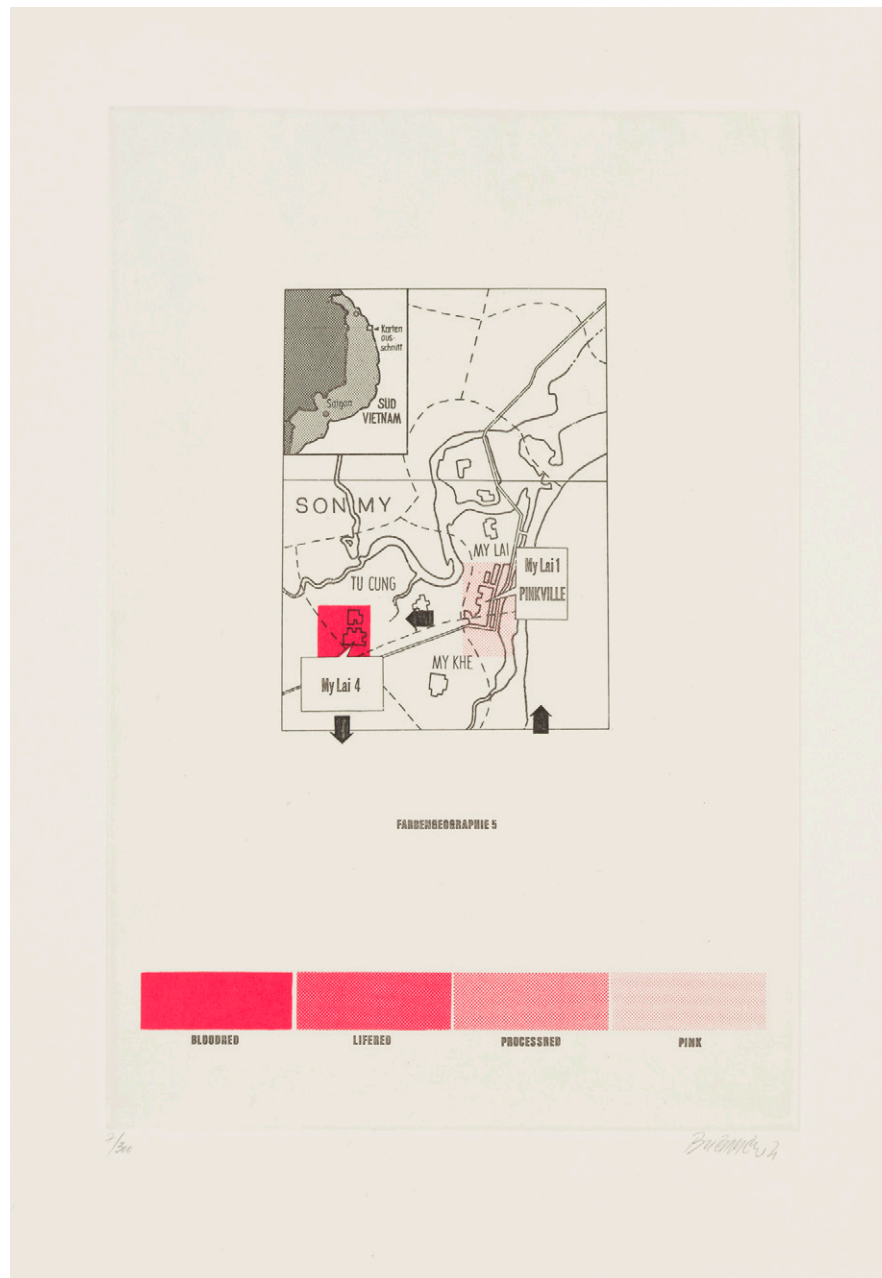
Color Geography 3, Location of Shades of Green, 1971
 Acrylic on plastic, two parts
 180 x 230 cm

"Colors from an industrial range of paints were located according to their names"

-KP Brehmer

Color Geographie 5, 1971
Location of Blood Red – Pink

"This chart was prompted by the events around My Lai. It is an attempt to visualize the event using a color scale. Blood red stands for My Lai 4, where the massacre on military maps as "Pinkville" (pink = especially densely populated area).



Pinkville, 1971
Etching and silkscreen on paper
45 x 32 cm

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