

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

ARTFORUM

Another Alphabet: The Art of Marcel Broodthaers

By Thomas McEvilley (November 1989)



Faithfully in spite of the winds that blow. I, too, am an apostle of silence. —Marcel Broodthaers

UNTIL HIS 40TH YEAR, 1964, Marcel Broodthaers was a poet with an interest in the visual arts, of which from time to time he wrote criticism. His conversion from poet to artist was marked by an exhibition in which the 50 remaining copies of his recent book of poems *Pense-Bête* (Think like an animal¹) were ensconced in a plaster base and exhibited as sculpture. After 12 years of artistic work, Broodthaers died in 1976. He had contradicted and recontradicted in the most deliberate way many of the public statements he had made about his art in the form of "open letters" and exhibition announcements. Accordingly, at his death, a certain critical void surrounded the work. No standard discourses about it had yet developed; it lay like an uncolonized territory inviting the planting of flags of possession.

The currently traveling retrospective of Broodthaers tends to present his work to the American audience as perplexing or mysterious. Marge Goldwater of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, for example, who, along with Michael Compton, organized the exhibition, uses the word "enigmatic" twice in her brief catalogue introduction; an advertisement for the Walker catalogue says that Broodthaers' "work is ultimately enigmatic and its meaning elusive."² Benjamin H. D. Buchloh has similarly referred to "the highly enigmatic and esoteric character of his work."³ So the cupboard filled with eggshells looks mutely at the viewer like a big question mark—as do the human thighbones painted in various colors, the child's stool with the beginning of an alphabet painted on it, the plastic panels with huge commas hanging like clouds in the sky, and more. Even in the post-'70s free-for-all, much of this oeuvre appears "enigmatic."

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

Joycean in its uncompromising challenge to the intellect, it seems either to aspire to a status of evocative meaninglessness, propped up by carefully constructed networks of inner contradiction, or to insist on its openness to a variety of arbitrarily devised accounts, none privileged above the others.

In 1978 the young Belgian critic Marie-Pascale Gildemyn wrote her master's thesis on Broodthaers, and followed it with several articles in which, without heavy critical intervention, she worked out a cautious iconographic approach to the most obvious elements of the oeuvre. A similar approach has been taken in Compton's various writings on Broodthaers, from his own Tate Gallery catalogue of 1980 to his much longer essay in the Walker book. These writers conceive Broodthaers' iconography as a personal one based not on the broad image traditions of cultural history but on private intentions. Eggshells and mussel shells, for example, both of them prominent elements of Broodthaers' early plastic vocabulary, are discussed not in relation to the long tradition of fertility and aphrodisiac meanings associated with both objects, but as symbols of a kind of ornery independence of personality. The two kinds of shell, in this view, assert the reality of forms of life shaped not by society's molds but by their own. This reading derives in part from Broodthaers' poems, with their Joycean-Duchampian love of puns such as *la moule*, mussel, and *le moule*, mold. Similarly, to both Gildemyn and Compton the eagle, a prominent icon in Broodthaers' later work, represents simultaneously the idea of the independent, transcendent artist and the power emblems of society—of individual independence on the one hand and, on the other, society's tendency to curb or compromise that independence.

A related yet significantly different approach was begun in 1974, with Michael Oppitz's Marxist-influenced interpretation of Broodthaers.⁴ More recently and more extensively, Buchloh, in various writings, has interpreted Broodthaers' objects as encodings of Marxist doctrines, or reflections of them. This approach casts the work as dealing with the commodification of art by the mainstream culture industry—the complex of forces generating the public images and discourses that cloud our awareness of social processes. Both the Compton and the Buchloh interpretations situate the work in reflections on society and the individual, but there is also a major difference. Compton seems to feel that Broodthaers' works are riddles to which no pat answers are to be found—"rebuses," as Broodthaers himself called them, but deliberately indecipherable ones. Determined meaninglessness is itself a meaning here, having to do with overturning conventional expectations and questioning the integrity of meanings in general. Buchloh, on the other hand, who refers to Compton's approach as the "conservative" one,⁵ seems to find answers more prominent than questions in Broodthaers' art, and these answers tend to be cast in the terms of Marxist thought, especially Walter Benjamin's.⁶ The inner contradiction in the work, for Compton an avoidance of taking a position, becomes an embodiment of the Marxist idea of dialectic. Compton's readings about unique individuality become Buchloh's readings about sociological processes. In 1987 Buchloh guest-edited an edition of *October* on Broodthaers, in which many of the essays tend to support a Marxist vision of the art's overall meaning. In the Walker catalogue, an essay by Douglas Crimp continues this approach.

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

Broodthaers was a member of the Belgian communist party for a few years in the late '40s and early '50s, then left it. In 1968 he participated in an artists' sit-in in the Brussels Palais des Beaux-Arts, the museum where he had once conducted docent's tours and where he would later give a major exhibition of his own work; he left, however, before the occupation was over, rendering his response to it ambiguous. Clearly he was touched and inspired by the events of 1968 (as were numerous Western intellectuals of various political stances). Finally, he took a course in Baudelaire from Lucien Goldmann, a follower of Georg Lukács, in the winter of 1969–70. It is questionable whether these connections with Marxism—distinct connections, to varying degrees, but hardly pervading the artist's life—should control interpretation of the oeuvre. Broodthaers did not express himself verbally as a Marxist, at least in his statements as a visual artist. He does not seem to have read Marxist authors widely, and, with the exception of Goldmann, professed a lack of interest in them. Buchloh actually acknowledges this silence, saying, "In Brodthaers' work from the mid '60s onwards, rarely, if ever, do we find an explicit reference or claim to the political nature of his artistic endeavour."⁷ Nevertheless, Buchloh and others read politics as the endeavor's core. Indeed Crimp, in the Walker catalogue, seems to believe that his readings according to Benjamin are known to have been those intended by Broodthaers.⁸ Of course one can apply a Marxist analysis to anything at all; the question in this case is whether that reading makes or implies undue claims about the artist's intentions.

The photographer Maria Gilissen, Broodthaers' wife from 1961 until his death, does not remember his intentions thus. Buchloh met Broodthaers, she recalls,⁹ in 1972, and they got together occasionally thereafter. In 1974, according to Gilissen, Buchloh broached his observations about the relevance of Benjamin to Broodthaers' work, and Broodthaers replied that he was unfamiliar with Benjamin's writings. Later that year Buchloh arrived with two books by Benjamin, which he left with Broodthaers. Some time later he reappeared, excitedly asking if Broodthaers did not now see that this was what his work was all about, whether he had consciously realized it or not. Broodthaers replied that he had not looked at the books, as they were in German, a language he did not read. Buchloh later returned with a Benjamin book in French, and Broodthaers was seen to leaf idly through it once or twice. This took place in 1974, two years before Broodthaers' death. Most of his work had been done by then, and all of its main themes clearly articulated, apparently without knowledge of the works of Benjamin.¹⁰ Yet Crimp mentions Benjamin 31 times in his 22-page catalogue essay. So the apostle of silence has been given a voice—and it is not his own.

A counterview would argue that Broodthaers' voice is in fact more complex and subtle than an exclusive ideological tendency would allow. It is a kind of multiple voice, incorporating a network of references, and it is neither as personally nor as art-historically hermetic as the intimidating claims of its mysteriousness would suggest. In fact, it is deeply related to the art of its time. Broodthaers selected certain anchors with which to position his entry into and practice of the visual arts. He chose the two most drifting, shifting moorages possible: "I have just followed," he wrote in 1965, "the footprints left in the artistic sands by René Magritte and Marcel Duchamp."¹¹ In the catalogue for his Düsseldorf exhibition in 1972, Broodthaers reproduced Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917, and Magritte's *La Trahison des images* (The treachery of images, 1928–29—the painting that contains the words "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*"). In effect, he proposed these as presiding icons over his oeuvre.

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

The format of Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919—altered found photograph with attached verbal element—marks the beginning of Brodthaers' work: in the announcement for his first exhibition, the text explaining his conversion from poet to object-maker ("I had the idea of inventing something insincere," he wrote) was printed over magazine photos. Duchamp's use, in the same piece, of a postcard reproduction of a classic European artwork is echoed in Brodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siècle* (Museum of modern art, eagle department, 19th-century section, 1968–69), in which he displayed postcards of famous French paintings in the living room of his home for a year. Duchamp's exhibition of empty vests is echoed in Brodthaers' exhibition of empty shirts. Duchamp's *Box in a valise*, 1936–41, is echoed in Brodthaers' suitcases containing such unexpected art materials as mussel shells, charcoal, and bricks. Brodthaers' exhibition of altered store-bought shovels is more than an allusion to a Duchamp work: it is an actual repetition or recreation of one.

Brodthaers apparently identified also with Duchamp's attitudes toward art and art history. When he says, for example, "I try as much as I can to circumscribe the problem [of the social engagement of art] by proposing little, all of it indifferent,"¹² he seems to be referring to Duchamp's "esthetics of indifference," in which the idea of indifference takes on positive meanings.¹³ In the same passage Brodthaers connects the Duchampian "indifference" with the Duchampian rejection of the profession of esthetic-object-maker: "At what moment does one start making indifferent art? From the moment that one is less of an artist, when the necessity of making puts down its roots in memory alone."¹⁴ This is deliberate Duchamp-talk. In another echo, Brodthaers wrote, "I don't believe in the unique artist or the unique artist or the unique work of art. I believe in phenomena and in men who put ideas together."¹⁵ Duchamp's refusal of the role of priestly artist, his rejection of the unique masterpiece, and his desire to put art back in the service of the mind are in the background of these remarks.¹⁶ Evidently Brodthaers felt that the only acceptable stance from which to practice art in the mid '60s was the Duchampian one of indifference, irony, contradiction, and mocking insincerity. He was not alone in feeling this at the time when Duchamp's influence, dormant for two generations, was arising and taking its revenge.

Brodthaers' redefinition of himself at mid life also involved the model of his Belgian countryman Magritte. A childlike rendering of a pipe like that in *La Trahison des images* is a fundamental vocabulary element in a number of his works, where it functions as a complex shorthand for a critique of the Kantian separation of (verbal) cognition and (visual) esthesis (a separation that both Duchamp and Magritte rejected when they incorporated linguistic and conceptual elements into the artwork) as well as for the Magrittean project of turning different modes of representation against one another. "It is with that pipe that I tackled the adventure," Brodthaers wrote.¹⁷ He also borrowed Magritte's formula "This is not a . . ." for another *Musée d'Art Moderne* installation in 1972. One of his works contains the street name "rue René Magritte"; he photographed Magritte and had photographs of himself taken with Magritte. The influences of Duchamp and Magritte on Brodthaers are explicit and no one argues about them. His aim was to go beyond these models into even purer realms of unaccountability than they achieved.

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

In terms of the art history of Broodthaers' own time, the crucial period from 1964 to 1976, there has been a marked neglect of the project of contextualizing the artist's work—a taste for arguing that the oeuvre is unique and uncategorizable. Yet when he declared that he was following in the footsteps of Duchamp and Magritte, Broodthaers continued, "and those new ones of George Segal, Roy Lichtenstein, and Claes Oldenburg." Though not willing to submit himself completely either to American Pop art or to its European relative in *Nouveau Réalisme*, Broodthaers consciously worked on their themes and images. His art shares with Pop, among other things, the use of advertising imagery and the general revival of Dada ridicule of mainstream culture. It also contains specific references to Pop motifs. In 1963, for example, Jim Dine had exhibited a painting of a bowler hat with a real bowler on a shelf beside it, painted black. The work seems in part a homage to Magritte, and Broodthaers not only reviewed it as a critic¹⁸ but himself made at least two works involving real hats within the following two years, *Chapeau blanc* (White hat, 1965) and *Chapeau buse avec trou* (Dunce hat with hole, 1965).

Some of the critical and subversive elements of Pop art—its interest in market forces, its deadpan humor, its quizzical approach to the art object—entered Broodthaers' oeuvre, then.¹⁹ The work also overlaps with classical Conceptual art (even more, perhaps, than with Pop).²⁰ Both have strong ties to language, and to its encoding in writing; both feature the influence of Duchamp and the introduction of found materials alongside linguistic elements; both critique modes of representation; both cultivate a position between, around, and outside the traditional media of painting and sculpture; both feature the theme of tautology;²¹ and, through a variety of tactics, both deconstruct the tradition of easel painting.²² The idea of the unique art object, for example, was mocked by Broodthaers' exhibition of postcards of paintings, and in *Dix-neuf petits tableaux en pile* (Nineteen small paintings in a pile, 1973) and *Pyramide de toiles* (Pyramid of canvases, 1973), painted canvases are stacked up to be experienced not as pictures but as sculptural presences, or mere mute matter. To focus on unevennesses in the relationship between language and image was a common aim in Conceptual art, and in other art of the '60s and '70s: paintings of alphabets, for example, were characteristic at one time or another of Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Piero Manzoni, Jannis Kounellis, Arakawa—and Broodthaers. In many Conceptual works the linguistic representation of a painting replaces the painting: in his "Mechanism of Meaning" series, 1963–71 and 1978, for example, Arakawa painted a landscape by putting on an otherwise blank canvas the words "sky," "trees," "house," and so on. Broodthaers similarly, in *La Salle blanche*, (The white room, 1975), set words like "light," "shadow," "sun," and "clouds" high on a wall, and lower down the names for things found under the sky, such as "water," "coast," "images," "eye," "museum."

This sort of drifting and shifting of categories appears in nonverbal form in *La Malédiction de Magritte* (Magritte's curse, 1966), where a printed photograph of a blue sky and a painted blue sky, set together on a panel, are fronted by shelves holding four jars of cloudlike cotton wool, two of them painted blue on the inside to match the image behind them. Neither photograph, nor painting, nor sculpture alone constitutes the work; none appears self-sufficient or stable. (Magritte's curse indeed.) The use of jars containing paint here echoes Duchamp's idea of the paint tube as a readymade,²³ Yves Klein's exhibition of his paint-rollers as sculpture, Arman's

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

accumulations of paint tubes in a picturelike surface, and other works in the Duchampian, Pop, and Conceptualist traditions. Another Broodthaers piece shows two windows marked respectively *toile* (canvas) and *huile* (oil); the traditional sense of the picture as a window is satirized by breaking painting down into its physical parts and then transposing these material elements into linguistic ones. Elsewhere Broodthaers presents the pictorial surface covered allover style with eggshells or mussel shells, echoing Manzoni's canvases studded with dinner rolls, Lucas Samaras' exhibition of plates with foodlike things on them as picturelike surfaces, Daniel Spoerri's "*Tableaux Piège*," and so on. In all these strategies the tradition of the transcendent representational capacity of the picture is parodied by a reduction of the painting to mere matter, by a transposition of its values into language, or by a shift from the category "culture" into that of "nature" (as in the egg- and mussel-shell "paintings").

Other works by Broodthaers vary and extend the vocabulary of this multibranched critique of painting. *La Peste*, 1974–75, undermines a specific painterly mode: it is an exaggeratedly expressionist canvas with the French word for "pestilence" stenciled over it. In other works Broodthaers simply painted his initials on the canvas as a "picture," and in *Il n'y a pas de structures primaires* (There are no primary structures, 1968) he painted, in elegant script, the French word "*signature*." Besides conflating linguistic and pictorial representation, as the artist did in so many works, these pieces put in play the ethical question of the primacy of artist over work, or of life over art. The gesture echoes the check Duchamp exhibited for the sake of his signature, Kounellis' paintings of his own initials, and many works by Ian Wilson and others. The genre evokes Klein's remark, suggested in countless works of Conceptual and performance art, that the artist has only to create one work, himself or herself, constantly.²⁴ In this respect, Broodthaers' practice of having somewhat auratic photographs of himself made, in an echo of both Duchamp and Klein, is essentially performative.

The positioning of some of Broodthaers' work between performance and Conceptual art is demonstrated by his 1971 gesture of selling gold bars at twice their market value. The "Contract" for these sales was based largely on Klein's 1959–62 ritual for "relinquishing" what he called "zones of immaterial pictorial sensibility" in exchange for gold. Article seven of Broodthaers' contract states, "The purchaser is free to have his lingot or bar melted, so as to obliterate the mark [of the eagle], or to burn the letter of identification in order to enjoy fully the purity of the substance and the freshness of the original intention." In Klein's piece the purchaser of the void "zone of sensibility" burned his or her receipt, and the artist threw half of the gold into the river Seine. Broodthaers' decision to accompany each bar of gold with a "manuscript letter from the curator in order to prevent the production of fakes" also recalls Duchamp's emphasis on the signature and, more distantly, Manzoni's "Certificates of Authenticity," which accredited their signers as works of art. Broodthaers himself possessed one of these certificates.

The practice of writing or otherwise working directly on the walls of the exhibition space—as Broodthaers did in *La Salle blanche*, and as many Conceptual artists have done, including Lawrence Weiner and Daniel Buren—invokes another mainstay of the Conceptual tradition, the emphasis on the primacy of the context over the thing viewed within it, and the consequent redefinition of the gallery space as the material of the work. This goes back to Duchamp's

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

seminal realization that a thing apparently not art can be designated as art by involving it in the art system of signatures, galleries, and so on. Duchamp also addressed the volume of the gallery as a material in his mile-of-string installation of 1942, as did Klein in *Le Vide*, 1960. In a parallel almost surely unconscious, Samaras reproduced his bedroom in a gallery in 1964, just as *La Salle blanche* is a museum reproduction of one and a half rooms of Broodthaers' home—the rooms in which his fictive museum had been performed. Various differences in sensibility are involved: Broodthaers' work, for one thing, involves a reflection on the museum setting that I would not attribute to Samaras'. But the vocabulary, the tactical maneuver being used for whatever purposes, was the same—and it was a vocabulary very much in the air during Broodthaers' 12-year career.²⁵ Marge Goldwater says that Broodthaers "merged art with life"²⁶—perhaps the most typical preoccupation of Pop, performance, and indeed the whole Duchampian tradition of the readymade and the rejection of Kantian esthetics.

I have tried to show by this web of allusions, parallels, and echoes in Broodthaers' art that it is neither unique nor, really, enigmatic *in the terms of its own time*, but deeply embedded in its time and cognizant of it. The work contains elements of Dada, Surrealism, Pop art, Conceptual art, and performance art, and is in effect a conflation of them—as is Beuys' work, and Klein's, and Manzoni's, and Kounellis', and Samaras'. This kind of conflation is a known, characteristic type of '70s art. Due in part to the feeling that Broodthaers' oeuvre is unique, and in part to its premature identification with a limited ideological set, however, it has not been subjected to much rounded analysis.

The artist himself suggested an avenue into the work when he remarked that for him *Le Général mort fume un cigare éteint* (The dead general smokes an extinguished cigar, 1968, a found portrait of a Belgian general into whose mouth Broodthaers has stuck a real cigar butt) and two pieces incorporating painted human thighbones were the works that held up best.²⁷ The altered painting deals with the themes of the found object re-signed and appropriated into another portfolio, denying the primacy of authorship; of the slippage from an illusionistic into a real space; of mockery of the artwork, the cigar butt resembling Duchamp's mustache drawn on the Mona Lisa; and of traditional art versus contemporary art, or versus so-called antiart. These ideas we have already seen present in the Conceptual and Magrittean/Duchampian elements of Broodthaer's work. But the image of the Belgian officer also introduces the themes of nationality and power, themes equally prominent in the two thighbone works. One of these, a male human femur, is painted black, yellow, and red, the colors of the Belgian flag (*Fémur d'homme belge*, 1965); the other, a female human femur, is painted red, white, and blue, the colors of the French flag (*Fémur de la femme française*, 1965). Three levels of reality are suggested by these objects. First is the raw biological reality of the bones, which asserts that these two people shared the fundamental identity of humanness, a biological, precultural species-identity. Over this sameness is laid a distinction, partly biological and partly cultural, between male and female; and on top of this is the thoroughly cultural distinction of nationality, designated by the references to the flags of two nations. Humans, the pieces say, are all more or less the same biologically, but as we get involved in culture we spin out superficial distinctions that obscure and divide. This basic liberal-humanist thinking (not unlike that underlying Jean Renoir's 1937 film *La Grande Illusion*) criticizes divisive cultural overlays in favor of an underlying

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

sameness. The work's subject matter seems to be false difference, its political foundations and its generation from political motives.

A pair of pieces involving maps, from 1968–73 and 1968, relate to these flag references: in the manufacturer's printed title, *Carte du monde politique*, the word *politique* is crossed out and replaced in one case with the handwritten word *utopique*, in the other with the word *poétique*. As with the human skeleton in the painted-thighbone works, the physical reality of the earth is seen to be the same, whatever differences a label imposes on it. Thus the world of political divisions becomes an arbitrary, artificial overlay on a material reality that lacks it. The world can equally easily be seen as political, utopian, or poetic; and humans can do whatever they want with the world—politicize it, poeticize it, utopianize it. In *Le Problème noir en Belgique* (The black problem in Belgium, 1963) intact eggs splattered with black paint sit on a newspaper with the headline "*Il faut sauver le Congo*" (The Congo must be saved; at the time, this former Belgian colony, now Zaire, had only recently gained its independence). Again there is a suggestion of underlying natural sameness (both Belgians and Congolese are born from the same eggs) beneath overlays of cultural difference. But here, contrary to Compton, it surely seems appropriate to refer to the general symbology of the egg—to wonder whether the latency or gestation of African culture is suggested, its need to emerge from its shell, to be born into the contemporary world. In these works generally the eggshell as a symbol of birth is no less prominent than its meanings as vessel of food, as mold, as form from nature. Broodthaers once drew an eggshell inside and around which he wrote and rewrote his initials; the letters are again a cultural label imposed on the egg to create difference, yet they are also suffused through the egg and inextricable from it. This casual-looking drawing suggests the possibility both of being nurtured by culture, of feeding on it, and of being born out of it, of having potentiality. The idea of latency and potential emergence is applied to Broodthaers himself, to the individual in general, and, in *Le Problème noir en Belgique*, to national or racial groups.

The bivalve shell, since antiquity, has been symbolically associated with the vagina: in Plautus, for example, when Aphrodite tells her young girl devotees to raise their skirts, she says, "Show me your little shells." The egg, of course, has a related iconographic content. There is no reason to suppose that Broodthaers was unaware of these connotations of the materials of his work. He wrote of eggs and shells as both containers and voids,²⁸ and I take the void here to mean potentiality, fullness-emptiness—that is, the emptiness that is full of yet-unrealized life. (This was the meaning the void had for Klein.) Nature (the bone, the earth, the egg, the shell) is viewed in Broodthaers' work as offering this kind of infinite and indefinite potentiality to a humanity whose culture, supposedly its means of expression, paradoxically operates as a rigid, constricting force. The polarities "container/contained" and "nature/culture" are controlling structural tensions, like architecture's stress-bearing girders, in many Broodthaers works. They are seen, for example, in *Bureau de moules*, 1966, the sideboard topped with mussel shells, and in numerous parallel combinations: shells (whether mussel or egg) in a cabinet, in a pan, in a bucket, in a suitcase. Can nature contain culture? Does culture contain nature? The container/contained theme suggests infinite regress: the cabinet (or bucket, or suitcase) contains the shells, but the shells are containers themselves. These works bring up questions of whether art stands apart from or partakes of reality (the question posed by the portrait with the

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

cigar), whether art is natural or cultural (born or made), whether it is compromised in either or both cases, whether it can be removed from one container and put into another, whether humans are nurtured by it, have control over it, and so on.

Actually, many of Brodthaers' works focus a critical eye on the Hegelian distinction between culture and nature. Hegel called culture "Work," because it is under human control, supposedly, and, also supposedly, because it has a purpose. Nature, on the other hand, he called "Madness," because he saw it as heading in no direction, and under no humanly accessible control.

Brodthaers suggests that the Madness of nature may be saner than the Work of culture. (Recall his work *Pense-Bête*, "Think like an animal.") *Une Pelle* (A shovel, 1965) is a spade, in an obvious reference to Duchamp's snow shovel. Brodthaers' spade, however, unlike the snow shovel and like his egg and mussel pieces, relates to the theme of fertility, for its metal blade is covered in wood-grain paper drawn over with a tree's root system. It looks, in other words, as if it had grown up out of the ground, in a reversal of its actual function of digging down into it. Again the Hegelian nature/culture distinction is reversed: human Work—the human effort to control and manipulate nature—is seen as itself rooted in nature, dependent on it. Culture is proposed as a disguised or unrecognized natural process. The issue is readdressed in a piece from ca. 1974, *Un mètre pliable* (A pliable meter), a folding ruler four of whose ten segments have been painted either green, red, or black. In a sense, the calibrated measurement numbers are elements of culture—of the human tendency to measure, categorize, label—and the colored areas represent nature, a visual, nonlinguistic, nonnumerical presence. On the other hand, the measurement may be seen as representing nature, the reality of space and of matter's extension in space, and the colored areas may represent art, the cultural estheticization of reality. The piece recalls Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages*, 1913–14, in which the artist made three eccentric rulers by dropping meter-long pieces of string and recording the shapes into which they fell. Duchamp also was dealing with Madness and Work—was attempting to get more nature, in the form of randomness, into culture.

The eagle represents Brodthaers' later work much as the egg- and mussel shells do the early period. In the 1968 *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section XIXème Siècle*—the show of postcard reproductions of 19th-century French paintings—the appellation "department of eagles" was unexplained. In 1972 came the installation *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis Heute)* (Museum of modern art, eagle department, figures section [The eagle from the Oligocene to the present.]) Here the artist-as-museum-director gathered over 300 objects containing images of eagles—some of them artworks, some ancient images, some commercial objects, packaging, and so forth. None of these distinctions mattered: every piece (except for three eagle eggs) involved the image of an eagle, and that category overrode all others. Every piece was attended by a label bearing a number and the statement, in French, German, or English, "This is not a work of art"—a conflation of Duchamp's tactic of designating something as art and of Magritte's "This is not a pipe."

Since antiquity the eagle, mighty among predator birds, has been associated with power. There is also a long connection with art:²⁹ supposedly like the poet or artist, the eagle rises above everyday affairs and at the same time looks down upon them with an acute, farseeing eye. The

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

two themes can be reconciled in the idea that if the eagle ascends to realms inaccessible to others, it can also fall with terrifying force upon what it sees. Myths and icons found worldwide describe the human who rides to heaven on an eagle's back, and the eagle fighting a serpent;³⁰ in both, the eagle represents the ability to transcend worldly reality and also to intervene in it for its betterment. The artist, analogously, can be a force not only of observation but of intervention, that is, of social involvement. (Though the eagle may also suggest the frightening power of distant, usually more or less invisible social authority.³¹) Brodthaers wrote in the press release for his exhibition of eagle images that his "fictive museum takes its point of departure from the identity of art and eagle."³² The related remark that his museum was born in the 1968 occupation of the Palais des Beaux-Arts³³ suggests that the subject of the piece is how to use art for social change. The label "This is not a work of art," then, may be read as an attack on the restriction of art to a special, sheltered niche in society, precluding its social engagement. This restriction is enforced conceptually by the system of Kantian esthetics and physically by the institution of the museum. Brodthaers' denial of the art status of his eagle icons releases the force of images, the force that Plato feared in his Republic, and undoes the ideological subjugation or co-option of art. The label does a real thing, makes a real ontological change. Naming or labeling, like a magical incantation, can make what it asserts, by asserting it.

This recognition was acted out in Brodthaers' switch of his own label, in mid career, from poet to artist. Much of his subsequent work investigated the relationship between labels and things. *Sculpture*, 1974, for example, is a suitcase of bricks with the word "Sculpture" painted on it. The container/contained dichotomy is combined with that of the thing and its label, and of the presence of a thing and its representation. Does the suitcase contain a sculpture or is it a sculpture? Are the bricks inside the suitcase a sculpture, and if so, are they such by virtue of their labeled container—their physical and ideological context? Do they suggest the rubble of the old society or the raw material with which to build the future? They are hidden in the suitcase as art is hidden in museums, but they lie there with the past and the future in them. Again, a milk bottle painted with the word *lait* (milk), from 1973, reproduces the common relationship between container and label: the bottle contains what the label denotes. In the coffee pot inscribed *ecrit* (writing), 1967, on the other hand, it is the label, not the vessel, that contains the thing named in the label. The label is a thing in its own right. Like a flag, it changes situations, creates divisions, multiplies categories. Brodthaers' negative uses of the label are a counterlabeling, a freeing of labeled things from their assigned categories. The idea of language's control over reality is a prominent theme of '70s art.

Before his career change Brodthaers had already dealt with labels in the tours of the Palais des Beaux-Arts that he gave as a docent. (Sometimes he behaved performatively during these tours—wearing a kilt, for example, to discuss Scottish art.) The docent's work—with its didactic pointing and naming, usually on a fairly simple level—surely helped Brodthaers to formulate his ideas about the museum. As a rudimentary educational exercise, it recalls the teaching of the alphabet to a child, and this suggests the coherence in Brodthaers' thought between his "*Musée d'Art Moderne*" pieces and his extensive use of the alphabet. Generally in his work, the alphabet is understood epistemologically and ethically as a grid with which to control perception and reality toward some unacknowledged end. It is a concept serving impulses of control and repression. Brodthaers undermines it in various ways. *Palette P*, 1974, shows letters of the

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

alphabet beside colors on a painter's palette; the conflation relates to Broodthaers' statement—made of a single work, but it might apply to all his art—"It was an attempt to deny, as far as possible, meaning to the word as well as to the image."³⁴ An alphabet running around the borders of a square of sand on the floor, with a potted plant at its center, suggests culture's ensnarement of nature in a conceptual grid (*Le Tapis de sable* [The carpet of sand, 1974]). A partial alphabet painted on a child's stool shows the closeness of the first conceptual imprint—that it is absorbed early, through virtually immediate contact (*Tabouret* [Footstool, 1968]). *Casier avec alphabet* (Cubbyhole rack with alphabet, 1967–73) is a shelf of cubbyholes each with a letter of the alphabet painted inside it, suggesting the process of fragmenting reality into separate categories. There is a deliberate avoidance of pattern, order, or predictability in many of these works. In the alphabet in *The Ballad of a Star Over Reading Gaol*, 1974, named after the poem by Oscar Wilde, the writer's initials are distinguished by black squares. But in other, related pieces (such as *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, 1974–75) the similar emphases of selected letters seem random.

"I see new horizons approaching me and the hope of another alphabet," Brodthaers wrote in 1974,³⁵ and he once referred to a group of his alphabet works under the general title "Apprendre à lire" (Learning to read). Many of his works raise the possibility of alien alphabets that might rearrange meanings and recreate the world. But before Brodthaers could discover such alphabets, he had to erase the old one. The theme of the erasure or prohibition of reading, canceling or nullifying the alphabet that created the present mind and the present world, appears in the transitional piece from his work as a writer—the poetry books cast in a matrix of plaster for *Pense-Bête*. Embedded in their base, the books are unreadable; but to remove them would destroy their status as sculpture. The visual and the verbal preclude one another, somewhat as in Magritte's riddle of the pipe. The piece denies a fundamental human assumption about reality: that different modes of perception may perceive the same thing, and that different modes of representation may represent the same thing.

Similar themes appear in Brodthaers' plastic plaques and artist's books. The plaques are mock paintings made in small multiple editions. Through their material and technology of facture, they reject the belief in the sacred body of the work of art. Sometimes they pose the museum as, in effect, an alphabet, a categorizing system that enforces a view of reality. A plaque reading "*Museum: Enfants non admis*" (no children allowed) suggests the possibility of an underlying innocence of mind, prior to the impression of categories upon it, and also proposes the museum as a dangerously corrupting place on the order of a Times Square movie house. Many of the plaques, addressing themselves to this innocent level of mind, resemble pages from children's instructional books. This again recalls Magritte, whose *La Trahison des images* imitates a page in a child's alphabetical almanac, and subverts a level of cultural conditioning operant in childhood—that of learning to read, and to identify pictures with words. Brodthaers' plaques also simulate devices for a child's learning of the alphabet or, sometimes, of the number series, but systems are always subverted or rendered Other through inner contradictions. Sometimes a repetition or decontextualization of an element reduces the sequence to absurdity, as when four large different-sized commas (in the colors of the Belgian flag) cluster in the picture space (*Cinéma Modèle*, 1970). Elsewhere series of letters or numbers are interrupted by omissions, or

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

by nonalphabetic and nonnumerical elements. In *Modèle: La Virgule* (Model: the comma, 1969), Magritte's pipe is substituted as an alphabetic element in four successive plaques, and in the fifth stands triumphantly alone except for a comma rising from it like a puff of smoke. The pipe represents the Magrittean paradox, the thing that is not itself, or the representation that does not represent its object. It is the alphabetic sign of chaos, the indefinite, the signifier with no signified, the unknown quantity, the universal blank, the wild card. The comma rises from the pipe as the vapor of the indefinite; it is the brief silence in which one takes a puff of smoke, and the dissolution of what is solid in smoke's Delphic swirl.

Broodthaers' plaques are child's instructional devices designed to drive an adult insane—or into Madness, into freedom from Work as enforced mental servitude. Broodthaers the poet became an artist to subvert the alphabet, the material of poets, by making and remaking it endlessly into randomness. "The alphabet," he wrote, "is a die with 26 faces."³⁶ As the die is cast, various orders are denied. One plaque shows a row of four commas, below it the numerals 1 to 5, and below that the terms of an art-historical list: David, Courbet, Ingres, Ingres, Wiertz. The duplication of Ingres confutes sequence, and the inclusion of the relatively obscure Belgian artist Antoine-Joseph Wiertz mocks the hierarchical structure of art history. Elsewhere words are arranged spatially like a picture, as they are in *La Salle blanche*, but they may not connote anything pictorial—"society," for example, or "empty paper"—and may make transitions between usually distinct categories such as culture and nature without visible discontinuity. Broodthaers referred to the plaques as "rebus," those puzzles made up of a mixture of visual and verbal elements. But these juxtaposition are inwardly self-obscuring; neither word nor picture is absolute, nor do they constructively complement one another. There is something here of the ancient sophistic argument that the senses may report on different, unconnected worlds.³⁷ They leave an indefinite space between them, and in that space, if anywhere, is to be found the real, which then remains undefined—symbolized by the pipe that is not a pipe.

In Brodthaers' book *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance, 1969), the original typesetting of Mallarmé's poem of the same title is reproduced as patterns of solid bars. Mallarmé's poem is well-known for its exploration of the spatial arrangement of poetry, for moving poetry into the visual realm. Broodthaers has drained out or covered over the verbal aspect and left only the visual. There is a sense of potentiality here, of the possibility of different alphabets, different ways of reading and of cognition, as in Mallarmé's remark that the perfect poem would be a blank sheet of paper—a void. Broodthaers' prototypical alien alphabet not only might present alternatives to the arbitrary cultural straitjacket of any moment, but might be the moment's future, its breaking out of the eggshell. By eliminating language he returns a classic Modern text part of the way from culture back to nature—from acculturated human thought to thinking "like an animal," to seeing the page as, say, a dog might.

In exhibiting the *Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis Heute)* wing of his modern-art museum, Broodthaers rejected considerations of form, of history, and of cultural categories such as art, advertising, functional object, and so on. His category—the eagle—was a simple slice through the reality of life. The reality of the subject matter appeared as directly as in a child's catechistic book—an almanac, an alphabet, or a bestiary.

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

This latter form—the pictorial and verbal book describing a selection of nonhuman species—Broodthaers had admired in La Fontaine and had worked on himself; his last poetry book invokes it. The bestiary is a map of reality according to a breakdown of species. Its author composes, as it were, an alphabet of species, a basic reality list. But *Pense-Bête* is an unusual bestiary, containing brief descriptions of a cockroach, a boa, a parrot, maggots, a lizard, a mussel, and a jellyfish. It is an alien alphabet that surreptitiously raises the question of what the future holds—of what the human species might become.

The bestiary theme reappears in Brodthaers' visual oeuvre in the slides projected for the installation *Un jardin d'hiver* (A winter garden, 1974), in the work called *Les Animaux de la ferme* (Farm animals, 1972), in the bird and shellfish references scattered through his art, and elsewhere. Restating the questioning of the line between nature and culture, it reveals the cultural organizing, categorizing, arranging in sequences, and so on, that are the basis of the museum, and of difference in general, yet at the same time its subjects are completely real, nonabstract natural beings of obvious existential persuasiveness. ("Think like an animal"....) What is missing from the bestiary's list of species is the human animal, which has both made the bestiary and left itself out of and above it. Again the issue is raised of whether nature contains culture or whether culture captures nature through its categorizations and representations. And this leads back to the question of the cigar in the portrait's mouth—the question of art as a natural, untutored human faculty or as a divisive cultural activity tending, like others, to produce illusory yet powerful feelings of difference.

Brodthaers' book *A Voyage on the North Sea*, 1973, reintroduces the theme of colonialism, which he focused on from time to time. The book presents itself as a tour of two pictures, one a photograph of a modern sailboat at sea, another an old painting showing an 18th-century fleet out on one colonialist enterprise or another. The reader is led page by page around these two images, observing cropped and enlarged details of them, as if pointed to different patterns of recurrence by an invisible docent. This pictorial alphabet, perfuming the atmosphere of the book, suggests the colonialist diffusion of European category-systems (alphabets) into cultures that had their own perceptual systems already in place. Alternatively, it implies the innocent mind of the rest of the world before the colonialist reprogramming. The old ships hasten on their way to pressure the dark-skinned natives of non-European lands to channel their gold and pearl this way. At the same time, the book's detail shots, with their emphasis on the grain of the canvas and with the quasi-Abstract Expressionistic value of their out-of-context perspectives, both invoke and critique the mystique of expressionist art. Our subjective expression is the Other's objective oppression.

The inner pages of the book are uncut. In a remarkable manipulation of the reader, Broodthaers has us gently separating signatures and peeking into them in case something might be written inside. (As with *Pense-Bête*, to open the pages would be to destroy the art object.) Inside the covers of *A Voyage* one reads, "Before cutting the pages the reader had better beware of the knife he will be wielding for the purpose." Before entering culture (and a book is an embodiment of culture), remember and fear its destructive effects. "Sooner than make such a gesture," the author goes on, "I would prefer him to hold back that weapon, dagger, piece of office equipment which, swift as lightning, might turn into an indefinite sky." The difference

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

between culture and nature is slimmer than you think. Nature always has the last word (death), but that last word is often spoken through the mouth of culture. Culture—those ships on the sea—is, in effect, a predatory part of nature.

To point out the limitations of categorical systems was part of the critique of representation that was an originating philosophical force in Conceptual art. Beneath the project lay a tacitly theological, subliminal faith that an unconditioned state of mind was possible; that cultural overlays might be erased from the mature mind so as to restore to us the state of mind of the child who has not yet entered the museum, has not yet been subjected to its conditioning lessons. This assumption was a longterm presence in Modernist art, and Brodthaers seems to have been impressed by it. The paradoxical 19th-century belief in innocence achieved through intelligence, as in the poems of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, stirred and at some level convinced him: *Sauver le Congo*, for example, echoes Baudelaire's fascination with the African as the primordial innocent, the natural mind uncorrupted by the (Western) cultural imprint. Still, on the whole, Brodthaers seems to have dissolved this idea in a critical perception of colonialism, Europe's cultural relationship to the rest of the world, and the arbitrary mechanisms by which such categorizing notions are imposed.

When Brodthaers talked about his work, it was not in terms of ideological content but, with whatever ironies in place, in terms of beauty. A level of sentiment and nostalgia sweetens the sometimes bitter draught of the oeuvre. *Langage de fleurs* (Language of flowers, 1965) is a palette with a rose in the center and vowels written here and there about it: flowers speak only in vowels. *Il est défendu*, 1975, a large painting on canvas, declares, in an elegant script, "It is forbidden to enter the garden with flowers in your hand; it is forbidden to enter the garden with flowers."

NOTES

1. Pense-bête is the French for a mnemonic device, a way of remembering something. It is also a pun translatable as either "think animal" or "think dumb."
2. Art in America 77 no. 9, September 1989, p. 129.
3. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," in Brodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs, ed. Buchloh, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, October Books, 1988, p. 68. Also published as October 42, Fall 1987.
4. See Michael Oppitz, "Rubens and der Wintergarten," in Catalogue/Catalogus, exhibition catalogue, Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1974, pp. 40–46.
5. Buchloh, p. 71, n. 8.
6. Marcel Brodthaers "concept of space," according to Buchloh, "is historically concrete and determined by the political and ideological functions which the work of art assumes in its cultural extrapolation; his concept of form is that of form-determination in Marx's sense of circulation-form (which implies that objects are determined by their commodity-form), and in

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

regard to esthetic production means that the work is defined by both the institutional framework that guarantees the work's semblance of autonomy as well as its distributional principles, its circulation-form of cultural commodity' (Buchloh, "Marcel Broodthaers: Allegories of the Avant-Garde," *Artforum* XVIII no. 9, May 1980, p. 56). "Numerous statements by Broodthaers make clear," Buchloh claims, "that he was systematically addressing these issues in his work" (*ibid.*). He proceeds to array quotations from Broodthaers that do not seem to bear on this topic at all, such as, "If space is really the fundamental element of artistic construction (either in form of language or in form of materials) I would have to oppose it with the philosophy of what has been written with a certain common sense. . . . The constant search for the definition of space serves only to cover up the essential structure of art, —a process of reification. Every individual, perceiving a function of space, and even more so if it is a convincing one, appropriates it either mentally or economically. . . . Space can only lead to paradise" (*ibid.*). This article is prefaced with a quote from Walter Benjamin. Remarks in Buchloh's "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art" (*Artforum* XXI no. 1, September 1982, p. 47) and his "The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers" (in *Museums by Artists*, Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983, p. 55) also relate Broodthaers' work to Benjamin.

7. Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," pp. 68–69.

8. For example, when he made himself an artist Broodthaers wrote that he had had the idea of "inventing something insincere"; Crimp responds, "such negative qualities are rarely so frankly admitted as the necessary stance of the artist working under the conditions of late capitalism"—as if Broodthaers had directly addressed the issue in those terms. (Douglas Crimp, "This Is Not a Museum of Art," in *Marcel Broodthaers*, exhibition catalogue, Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, and New York: Rizzoli, 1989, pp. 71-72.) Again, Crimp remarks a time when Broodthaers "could no longer perform the task of the historical materialist in the guise of the collector's countertype" (*ibid.*, p. 75), evidently assuming that Broodthaers' conscious intention was to "perform the task of the historical materialist."

It is cautionary that in a prefatory note to the Walker book in which Crimp's essay appears, Maria Gilissen, Broodthaers' widow, writes, "Critics should not be too certain in attributing thoughts to Broodthaers, even when they quote extracts from his own words. And too many have tried to fit him in the mold of the thought of fashionable theorists."

9. In a telephonic conversation with the author, 21 May 1989. In a later conversation, on 5 September 1989, Gilissen spoke of Broodthaer's professed lack of interest in Marxist authors generally.

10. Broodthaers shared with Benjamin a concern about the commercialization of art, but the stance is characteristic of the whole romantic tradition. An artist like Marcel Duchamp, say, surely no Marxist, shared it.

11. Broodthaers, quoted in Michael Compton, "In Praise of the Subject," in *Marcel Broodthaers*, p. 32.

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

12. Broodthaers, "Ten Thousand Francs Reward," 1974, in Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs, p. 45.
13. See Thomas McEvilley, "Empyrrhal Thinking (And Why Kant Can't)," *Artforum* XXVII no. 2, October 1988, pp.120–27.
14. Broodthaers, "Ten Thousand Francs Reward," p. 45.
15. Ibid., p. 46.
16. One wonders whether the name of Broodthaers' work *Pense-Bête* might not relate to Duchamp's phrase *bête comme un peintre*, with which he underscored his rejection of the Kantian theoretical heritage. Broodthaers surely meant these and other parallels to operate as a kind of semaphore establishing an art-historical parameter for his work, as well as a sense of shared intentions. So clear are the parallels that they imply elements of satire of the process of imitating, reproducing, influencing, and alluding that constitutes art history.
17. Broodthaers, "Ten Thousand Francs Reward," p. 43. In this passage he rejects André Breton's quasi-mystical approach to Surrealism, saying, "With *Ceci nest pas une pipe* Magritte did not take things so lightly. But then again he was too much Magritte. By which I mean that he was too little *Ceci nest pas une pipe*. It is with that pipe that I tackled the adventure." To paraphrase: Breton was too "light" in his rejection of experienced distinctions; Magritte, on the other hand, emphasized distinctions such as that between word and image, though he did not pursue the problem in his other, more "Magrittean" works. Broodthaers intended to continue the adventure begun and abandoned by Magritte—the critical investigation of representation to which the pipe paintings were the signpost.
18. Broodthaers. "Gare au défi," 1963, reprinted in Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs, pp. 33–34.
19. Buchloh writes, "Broodthaers anticipated, as early as the mid-1960s, the complete transformation of artistic production into a branch of the culture industry, a phenomenon which we only now recognize" (Buchloh, "Introductory Note," in Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs, p. 5). Yet this recognition was at the root of Pop art in general. Andy Warhol pinpointed it with his paintings of money and commercial products in the late '50s, as did Jasper Johns with his bronze ale can and other works. Indeed this recognition was essential to Duchamp's work. It is true that Broodthaers wrote, "I took a flaming critical position against [Pop] art" (quoted in Buchloh. "Marcel Broodthaers: Allegories of the Avant-Garde," p. 54). and that the Pop artists were following the "road to hell that was begun by Dada" ("Gare au défi," p. 34). Still, the confrontation with this art seems to have had a lot to do with his conversion from poet to artist, and his own work would soon be on that road to hell.
20. Nicolas Calas describes the work as a "critique of art by artistic means" (Calas with Elena Calas, "Extracts from 'Human Comedy' 1982," in Marcel Broodthaers, exhibition catalogue, Ness York: Gallery Marian Goodman, 1984, n. p.). The phrase could serve as a definition of

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

Conceptual art. Compton denies that the work is Conceptual art while saying that for Broodthaers, "complexities of meaning . . . were the essential material of art" ("In Praise of the Subject," p. 40), again a s virtual definition of Conceptual art._

21. Compare for example Broodthaers use of "Fig. I" as a visual image with Joseph Kosuth's 1965 work Three Color Sentence. In both, the serbal name is the visual image and vice versa.

22. Compton argues that Broodthaers work is not a critique of easel painting but an impassioned affirmation of it. His approach seems contradictory. The argument that the appeal of Broodthaers' objects is "primary," i.e., that it has its effect before any conceptual associations, is essentially a formalist approach that keeps the artist in the Kantian fold. Yet at the same time Compton argues that the work is a puzzle that requires to be solved yet never can be- a Conceptual, deconstructive art, in other words, attempting to stymie the mind's impulse to categorize and interpret.

23. See Thierrs de Duse. "The Reads made and the Tube of Paint," ArtforumXXIV no. 9, May 1986, pp. 110-21.

24. See Yves Klein 1928-1962, A Retrospective, Houston: Institute for the Arts, and New York: The Arts Publisher, Inc., 1982. p. 21.

25. The idea of Broodthaers' unique, uncategorizable role may result in part from the fact that his position on the issues is not always clear. kosuth, for example, clearly opposes traditional esthetics; Broodthaers. though perhaps equally skeptical of them. ssorks much more closely with them. Similarly, both Daniel Buren and Michael Asher extended Yves Klein's use of the gallery as the exhibited thing (the container instead of the contained) in a way clearly critical of the gallery; but Broodthaers venerated the collection of things at the same time that he undermined the ideology of collecting. He avoided taking straightforward for-or-against positions, but this does not make him mysterious or obscure. It suggests a respect for the subtlety and complexity of issues combined with a Duchampian abstinence from partisan statements of position

26. Marge Goldwater. "Introduction," Marcel Broodthaers (Walker,Rizzoli), p. 9.

27. Broodthaers, "Ten Thousand Francs Reward." p. 39.

28. See, for example. ibid., p. 41: "A mussel conceals a volume."

29. In the classical period, a certain relationship between art and political power, or the power of force, was encapsulated in the eagle icon: the eagle of Zeus, the god's instrument of foreseeing and violent intersention, was lulled to sleep only by the lyre of Apollo. See Pindar's first Pythian ode. And Pindar himself was called "the Theban eagle"—the eagle now representing not the force that the poet would soothe but the actual poet.

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

30. Important examples include the Sumerian myth of Etana (see James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Princeton: at the University Press, 1955, p. 114) and the Hindu myth of Vishnu and Garuda (see Alain Panicle, *Hindu Polytheism*, New York: Pantheon Books/Bollingen Foundation, 1964, p. 160).
31. Of the eagle in Broodthaers' work, Compton says, "it may surely be understood to stand both for the myth of the free artist and for the poser of the systems which control him" ("In Praise of the Subject." p. 50). Gildernyn has spoken similarly, and there are hints of this direction in Broodthaers' writings.
32. Broodthaers, quoted in Rainer Borgemeister. "Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present." in Broodthaers: Writings. Interviews, Photographs, p. 147.
33. Broodthaers, quoted in Buchloh, "Open Letters. Industrial Poems," p. 69.
34. Broodthaers. in "An Interview with Marcel Broodthaers by the Film Journal Trépied," in Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs, p. 36. The work in question is the film *Le Corbeau et le renard*, 1967.
35. In the flyer for the exhibition *Un jardin d'hiver* (A winter garden, 1974). Quoted in Buchloh, "Marcel Broodthaers: Allegories of the Avant-Garde," p. 58.
36. Broodthaers, untitled poem, 1966-68, in *Marcel Broodthaers*(Walker/Rizzoli), p. 6.
37. Found in Gorgias, *On Nature, or on Non-Being*, in M. Untersteiner, ed., *I Sofisti. testimonianze e frammenti*, Florence: Fasc. II, 2nd ed., 1961.