

MIT Open Access Articles

The Cavern of Antimatter: Giuseppe "Pinot" Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the Early Situationist International

The MIT Faculty has made this article openly available. **Please share** how this access benefits you. Your story matters.

Citation: Nicola Pezolet, "The Cavern of Antimatter: Giuseppe "Pinot" Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the Early Situationist International," Grey Room, Winter 2010, No. 38, Pages 62-89. (doi:10.1162/grey.2010.1.38.62) © 2010 by Grey Room, Inc. and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

As Published: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/grey.2010.1.38.62>

Publisher: MIT Press Journals

Persistent URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/55965>

Version: Final published version: final published article, as it appeared in a journal, conference proceedings, or other formally published context

Terms of Use: Article is made available in accordance with the publisher's policy and may be subject to US copyright law. Please refer to the publisher's site for terms of use.





Pinot Gallizio, Asger Jorn, Piero Simondo, and friends working outside the Alba Experimental Laboratory, 1956. Courtesy of the Gallizio Archive, Turin.

The Cavern of Antimatter: Giuseppe “Pinot” Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the Early Situationist International

NICOLA PEZOLET

Perhaps the machine is the only instrument qualified to create that is inflationary and industrial and therefore based on the anti-patent; the new industrial culture will only be “Made by the People,” or it will not be.

—Giuseppe “Pinot” Gallizio, 1959

During its formative years (1957–1960), the Situationist International (SI) charted a paradoxical relationship between an enthusiasm for a technological future and a surrealist longing for the premodern. In the first installments of the *Internationale situationniste*, alongside articles by Asger Jorn, Giuseppe “Pinot” Gallizio, and others are several unsigned articles, most of which were written by the editor, Guy-Ernest Debord, advocating the “destruction of the subject” and the use of contemporary machines to systematize and consciously organize “what the Surrealists had still experienced as random, as the marvelous.”¹ According to Debord, the surrealists originally provided useful insights in their indictment of bourgeois society but soon regressed into an occultist movement that failed to recognize the potential of modern “conditioning techniques.”² As a response to such a deterioration of surrealism’s subversive potential and its cooptation by commercial interests, Gallizio’s “industrial paintings” were championed by Debord as a new technological form of creativity that would bring a fatal blow to the outdated avant-garde and that could be used to create liberating, transitory “situations” signaling the emergence of a revolutionary movement.³ By using “industrial painting”—as well as *détournement* and several other technological and scientific metaphors—Debord attempted to work through the influential practices of André Breton’s group, which still occupied a prominent role in postwar Europe.

Thus, the situationist attacks on the surrealists deserve closer historical

scrutiny and contextualization. The objective of this essay is to show the diversity of views within the SI beyond Debord's dominant viewpoint, as well as to clarify the relationship between situationism and surrealism, a relationship that is both mimetic and conflictual. These issues are instantiated in the work of the significant, if now obscure, situationist satellite figure Gallizio.⁴ This case study benefits from recently published archival documents and focuses on the elaboration of the Cavern of Antimatter (Caverne de l'anti-matière), an exhibition of Gallizio's "industrial painting" presented at the Galerie Drouin, Paris, in May 1959.

Who was Gallizio? How did he come to collaborate with the situationists, and what were his personal views on surrealism? How faithfully were his ideas presented in the ghostwritten articles published in *Internationale situationniste*? Moreover, did the surrealists indeed wholeheartedly reject science and technology, as the situationists sometimes proclaimed? And to what extent did the situationists actually employ mechanical means to produce their "industrial paintings"? What are the connections—both real and metaphorical—between Gallizio's industrial painting and surrealist automatism? Is industrial painting complicit with social mechanization and automation, or is it their critical antagonist?

After demonstrating where these questions intersect in the 1959 exhibition, I show how Debord used industrial painting to propel an image of the situationists as more technologically savvy than the aging surrealists. At the same time, a closer study of Gallizio's work helps us cut through some of Debord's self-fashioning and reveal late surrealism and the early SI as multifaceted and sometimes self-contradictory movements. Not only was the situationist group clearly indebted to surrealism, but its performative technological mode of production, one that reinterpreted automatist techniques to master unresolved aspirations from the past, is best interpreted in light of the SI's anxious—and ultimately unfulfilled—attempt to occupy the space of its immediate predecessor in the cultural field.⁵

Gallizio and the Alba Experimental Laboratory

Gallizio, although central to the situationist operation, has largely been left out of recent Anglo-American SI scholarship. He officially joined the group in July 1957, when he was in his fifties and had already spent most of his life working as a professional scientist. He always presented himself not only as an artist but also as a chemist, botanist, and archaeologist. All of these fields were part of a unitary research platform that he hoped would defy disciplinary professionalization and help free modern science from its subservience to capitalism by reconnecting it to more "primordial" roots. Gallizio started to paint only toward the end of his

life. He was already fifty when, in 1953, he met Piero Simondo, the young artist from Albisola who introduced him to the world of modern art. Prior to that time he had held different jobs as a professional scientist, most of which were critical of the conservative scientific establishment of his time. After graduating in 1923 from the Facoltà di Chimica e Farmacia (Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy) of the University of Turin, Gallizio served in the military. He was mobilized during World War II, first serving as a pharmaceutical doctor. After his own pharmacy closed, Gallizio started to conduct innovative experiments with herbal medicine and aromatherapy using oenological perfumes. He then joined the antifascist partisans in the Alps, working for the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (Committee of National Liberation, or CLN, the group in which he started his political career as a Communist activist, eventually getting elected at the Alba *comune*). After the war, he continued to experiment with herbal perfumes, first teaching at the University of Turin, then founding a *laboratorio sperimentale* (experimental laboratory) near the Institute of Agriculture of Alba. His interest in herbs and flowers, which was essentially medicinal, soon became ecological. For instance, Gallizio hoped to cultivate lavender, juniper, and licorice as a way to diversify the environment of the Langhe, a hilly area to the southwest of the river Tanaro close to Alba. Gallizio also practiced archeology in Italy in the early 1950s, during which time he published *Nuovi ritrovamenti nella stazione neolitica di Alba* about his various finds from the Neolithic period. “What motivated his research,” explains the art historian Maria Teresa Roberto, “was the hope that he would one day identify an original spatial unity, the archetype of the cave dwellings that functioned as shelter, habitation and burial place.”⁶

The Alba Experimental Laboratory, out of which grew the experiments with industrial painting, predates the SI. While it is an altogether different place, it has the same name as the extension of the Institute of Agriculture of Alba previously founded by Gallizio in 1946 to produce herbal medicines. According to Gallizio’s diary, the new experimental laboratory, which was in fact nothing more than his family residence, was founded in September 1955 as part of his collaboration with the Danish artist Asger Jorn, leader of the informal *Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste* (International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, MIBI). Their decision to found such a laboratory was a direct response to the refusal of the Swiss artist and architect Max Bill, then rector of the West German Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, to offer a prominent place for experimental painters and sculptors at his school of design, which nevertheless presented itself to the world as the “new Bauhaus.”⁷ Jorn resented the fact that Bill monopolized the name

Bauhaus—once a beacon of experimental art and design, as well as of alternative lifestyles and radical politics—for his so-called functionalist establishment.⁸ Jorn hoped instead to create, alongside his new allies, a popular institution (or “folk school”) in which they could conduct artistic, scientific, and technological research programs free from the demands of the industrial market. The cellar of Gallizio’s home was therefore renamed the Alba Experimental Laboratory in order to underline the relations that linked Gallizio’s current artistic production to his previous botanical and pharmaceutical research, all of which tried to mitigate the colonization of everyday life by what would soon be referred to as the military-industrial complex. Indeed, Jorn and Gallizio founded their experimental laboratory as a utopian project to develop new forms of creativity open to everyone and inextricably bound up with daily life so as to steer modern culture away from technocracy, militarism, and conspicuous consumption.

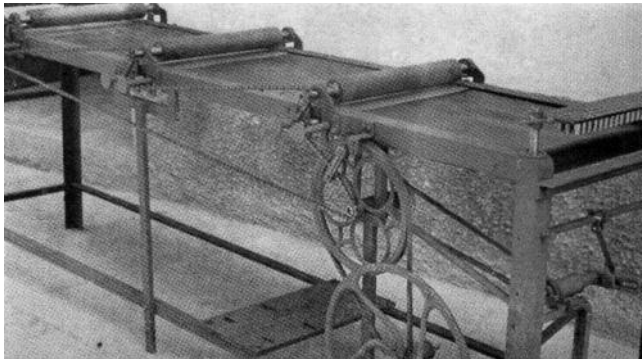
The experimental laboratory, located in a pastoral setting, was in a state of relative isolation from the rest of modern Italian society. Different from both the secretive “big science” laboratories emerging in Europe (such as the European Organization for Nuclear Research, one of the first such laboratories, established in Geneva in 1954) and the more inward-looking artist studios, the laboratory tried to partake in the edification of a new public sphere by offering to its numerous visitors the image of an “antiworld,” a scientific term cherished by Gallizio, which he casually borrowed from the work of the Italian physicist Francesco Pannaria. The chaotic and playfully decorated interior of the laboratory, he thought, could train guests in new perceptual habits and create new subjectivities adapted to a communitarian political system (the opposite, or “antiworld,” of capitalism). Set in a cellar with a vaulted brick roof that evoked a grotto, the laboratory was a space evocative of the prehistoric caves unearthed by Gallizio near Alba. In the laboratory, Gallizio proclaimed that he and his friends were keeping alive a primordial spirit of communalism. Jorn, Gallizio, his son Giorgio (also known as Giors Melanotte), their friend Piero Simondo, and their assistant Glauco Wuerich discussed science, especially chemistry and quantum physics, along with aesthetics, philosophy, and politics. They called the collaborative paintings they produced in the laboratory, which were used mostly to decorate the walls, *peintures d’ensemble* (ensemble paintings). Local people and children were also encouraged to join them, to see their work on display, and to freely learn about Gallizio’s “anti-economic” experiments, supposedly the products of “pure working solidarity.”⁹ Occasionally joined by other artists from Italy or elsewhere around the world (such as the nuclearist artist Enrico Baj and the younger surrealist

Roberto Matta), they worked collectively to produce a vast quantity of abstract-gestural paintings sometimes several meters in length in which they combined industrial and organic materials such as sand, oil paint, resins, metal filings, feathers, and egg shells. Parallel to these pictorial experiments, Gallizio kept detailed, and somewhat delirious, diary entries in which he tried empirically to connect colors to odorous resins—just as he had previously tried to establish connections between plants and their reactions to sunlight (photosynthesis).

During the summer of 1956, the members of the laboratory organized the Congresso Mondiale degli Artisti Liberi (World Congress of Free Artists) in Alba, a preliminary event to which different groups of artists were invited, and which led to the conference of Cosio d'Arroscia a year later. As was previously the case for the Cobra gatherings in which Jorn participated, this event was as much an occasion to share ideas and make public statements as to produce art in a playful context. The members of the MIBI (Jorn and Gallizio) and of the Internationale Lettriste (only Gil J. Wolman attended) made speeches at the Alba *comune*, publicly expressing their virulent critique of “functionalist” architecture and design. Joined by Constant, a former member of the Dutch branch of Cobra who had recently started to devote much time and energy to architecture and urbanism, the informal collective of artists produced several abstract paintings near Gallizio's house. Working outdoors using instruments such as brushes, bottles, funnels, or agricultural sprayers, the artists worked in close proximity to one another, passing the paintings from hand to hand, either mocking or emulating workers exchanging pieces of equipment on an assembly line.

The Antinomies of “Industrial Painting”

At this time, in 1956, Gallizio first used the expression “industrial painting” in his diary, perhaps as a joke, to describe the group's artistic process. The paintings were in fact individual pieces on canvas and were mostly handmade, produced in a similar spirit to the ones previously conceived in the laboratory (*peintures d'ensemble*).¹⁰ This collaborative effort led shortly afterward to a show at the Politeama Corino in Turin where the paintings were exhibited to the local public, along with a long blank canvas with graffiti-like inscriptions by the lettrist Wolman that proclaimed that “all the canvases are guaranteed ‘pure cotton.’” This ironic comment seems to suggest that the canvas is worth more than the painting itself, a reversal of traditional economic value of artworks. The lettrists had also attempted to devalue the value of art by promoting as “propaganda” their small collages, known as *métagraphies influentielles*, made mostly from scraps of “print capitalism.”



Top: Photograph of a machine allegedly used in the Alba Experimental Laboratory. Courtesy of the Gallizio Archive, Turin.

Bottom: Pinot and Giorgio Gallizio in the Alba Experimental Laboratory, 1958. Courtesy of the Gallizio Archive, Turin.



In early 1958—a few months after the founding of the SI in July 1957 in Cosio d’Arroschia, an event in which Gallizio and Jorn actively participated—the experiments with industrial painting continued. These first attempts were a direct continuation of the preliminary work produced during the Congress of Free Artists. However, the main difference is that the artists would produce one long roll of painting instead of several small canvases on a mock assembly line. The exact way that Gallizio, Melanotte, and Wuerich produced the first roll—measuring 68 meters long by 75 centimeters wide—is not fully documented. Several images of the inside of the laboratory exist, and pictures of their equipment were reproduced in the situationist monograph on Gallizio published by La Bibliothèque d’Alexandrie in 1960. However, as noted

by the critic Sandro Ricaldone, the photograph of the hand-activated printing table allegedly used to make “industrial paintings” does not faithfully represent the instruments that were actually used.¹¹

The extremely long rolls, despite the intentionally ambiguous word *industrial*, were hastily produced using elementary, mostly handheld tools, just like the works shown at the Turin show in 1956. For instance, in almost all of the known photographs of the laboratory, Gallizio and the other artists are seen holding traditional studio implements such as brushes and trowels. Gallizio also mentions in a 1963 Italian documentary devoted to his work that the laboratory is “practically a workshop” and that the tools he uses are “of a certain coarseness.”¹² As for the machines seen in the photographs of the laboratory, they played only secondary roles. Based on the available information, we can safely say that Gallizio and his comrades likely placed a long strip of canvas (or *populit*, an inexpensive composite material, made of wool and algae, that was popular for commercial uses in postwar Italy) on wood structures and plastered it with liquid chemical resins. Then, using brushes or rudimentary agricultural sprayers, they would cover it with herbal perfumes, explosive powders, and color pigments.¹³ Finally, the paintings were left to dry next to the cellar’s radiator. The gradual chemical reactions—those

Collaboration between Pinot Gallizio and Soshana Afroym, 1959. Courtesy of the Gallizio Archive, Turin.

processes that filled the laboratory with dangerous emanations that had to be removed using extractor fans—created extraordinarily vivid abstract painterly effects that were on rare occasions painted over by the artists. For instance, they occasionally added semifigurative elements such as symbols or crude drawings that were somewhat evocative of the hand traces and drawings of animals found in the famous prehistoric caverns at Altamira in 1879 and Lascaux in 1940 (these prehistoric drawings were also referenced by surrealist and abstract expressionist artists). On frequent occasions when the artists left the laboratory to paint the rolls outside, nature “became a partner in the unpredictable creative process, where a gust of wind would deposit all sorts of debris onto the wet, sticky surfaces.”¹⁴

The Cavern of Antimatter project was born, or at least became foreseeable, in the experimental laboratory. On the one hand, the laboratory’s structures, however scarce and rudimentary these were in practice, afforded Gallizio a semipermanent site within which to create new networks for artists and nonprofessionals to meet in order to produce industrial paintings, which required an organized, collective endeavor. On the other hand, the evocation of the cavern was a key metaphor for Gallizio’s ongoing research in art and archeology: the cavern is a unitary spatial setting and an imaginary symbol of humanity’s communal creative impulse—a view that was shared by many people close to the surrealists and to the reviews *Cahiers d’art* and *Documents*, such as Pablo Picasso, Georges-Henri Rivière, and Georges Bataille. As for Gallizio’s laboratory experiments, despite their pseudoscientific appearance, they should not be considered as completely irrationalist or “primitivist.” They were engaged in the search for a holistic rationality that would allow for the greater understanding of unexpected relationships and chance configurations, as well as for ecological concerns. This new rationality, which Gallizio liked to call “critical ignorance” (*ignoranza critica*) would also account for dreams and creative mistakes that make up a vast part of history and of daily life. In one of his undated diary entries, probably from 1958, Gallizio writes:



Artistic science

1st notebook
industrial painting technique
galaxies anti-galaxies
citizen of the anti-world
The principle of exchange in art
“Communicating vessels”¹⁵

Several points link this work and surrealism. The artist ends the diary note with an explicit reference to the title of André Breton’s 1932 book *Les vases communicants* (*Communicating Vessels*), whose title alludes to the scientific experiment of the same name.¹⁶ In the book, Breton tries to define *hasard objectif*, or “objective chance.” Gallizio’s attempt to make art a cognitive research method is evocative of Breton’s theory, which, according to the surrealists, was to draw historical and conceptual connections between scientific and poetic ideas from the nineteenth century up to the present. This research program, theorized in some detail in articles on the “crisis of the Surrealist object” for *Cahiers d’art*, *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*, and also during the 1936 exhibition of surrealist objects in Paris, suggested that surrealist research was furthering the process by which “reason” is today “constantly remolding its image” through “a continuous assimilation of the irrational.”¹⁷ Indeed, Breton, alluding favorably to Gaston Bachelard’s seminal book *Le nouvel esprit scientifique* (*The New Scientific Spirit*) and to his concept of “surrationalisme” (also explored by Jorn, who painted a portrait of the philosopher in 1960, and by some other members of Cobra who took classes with him at the Sorbonne), argued that surrealism heralded a “new way of thought” that would help free society from “anxiety,” lack of “human brotherhood,” and “petrified systems.”¹⁸ Walter L. Adamson notes, regarding the direction of Breton’s group in the 1930s, “Surrealism was at the forefront of the reorientation of science away from positivism and its technical interest in control over nature and society toward a ‘Surrationalisme’ that would, in Habermas’s later vocabulary, pursue an ‘emancipatory cognitive interest’ leading to social equality and individual creative self-realization.”¹⁹

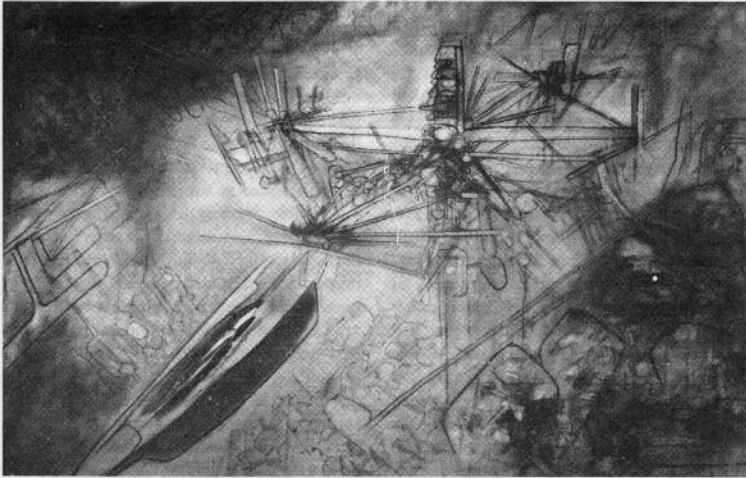
Gallizio’s so-called industrial techniques were not only intimately connected to Breton’s theory of objective chance, they were also a direct continuation of the aleatory and improvisational techniques based on automatism (such as Óscar Domínguez’s *décalcomanies*, Wolfgang Paalen’s *fumages*, or Max Ernst’s *frottages*, which all sought to express the human unconscious and the unpredictability of nature through material practices involving simple tools). The fundamental difference,



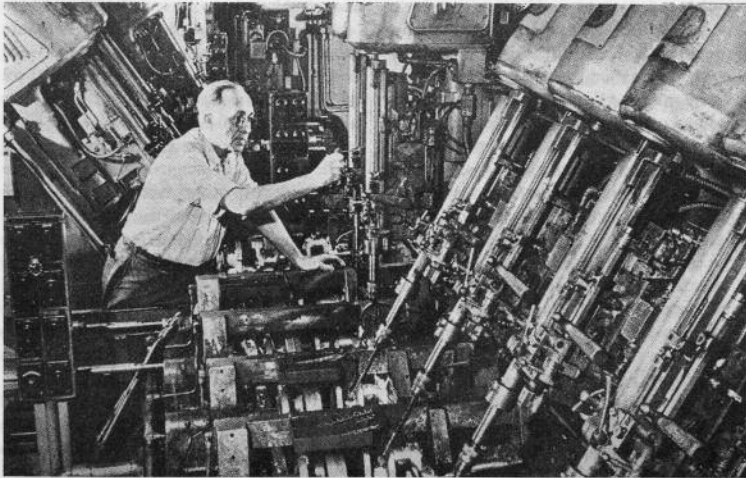
however, lies in Gallizio's decision to produce *quantitatively*, or, to use his own words, in an anti-economical, inflationary manner.²⁰ As he and his assistants became more proficient with their techniques and equipment, the group started to rapidly produce hundreds of meters of industrial paintings. The small "assembly line" of artists required to produce the rolls (as seen in photographs of the Congress of Free Artists and of the experimental laboratory) also reenacts on a larger scale the famous surrealist game of *cadavre exquis*, whereby different parts of an artwork are produced by different hands more or less oblivious to what the others had previously done. Such types of performative surrealist collaborations, argues Hal Foster, were bound up with social mechanization, but instead of trying to "cancel" it they are dialectically critical of it. Indeed, the collaborations "evaded the conscious control of the individual artist," but they also consciously "mocked the rationalized order of mass production." Much like its surrealist predecessor, industrial paintings were "critical perversions of the assembly line—a form of automatism that parodies the world of automatization."²¹ (In Jorn's 1958 book *Pour la forme*, such a parody is made explicit when the author juxtaposes an untitled painting by Matta that represents a kind of mechanical "bachelor machine" with a photograph of a worker on an automated assembly line.)

In producing quantitatively and by systematically applying chance operations, Gallizio sought to break the illusory antinomy between chance and order, individual and mass-produced objects. Instead of merely valorizing the *bizarre*, as many of the surrealists did by producing singular objects that often idealized the ideas of chance and formal irregularity, Gallizio hoped to theorize and enact a dialectical artistic

Asger Jorn. *Pour la forme*, 1958. Painting by Roberto Matta and photograph of a worker on an assembly line. Courtesy of the Jorn Archive, Silkeborg Kunstmuseum.



PEINTURE DE MATTA



OUVRIER DANS UNE USINE AUTOMATISÉE

production. Industrial painting was, in a sense, complicit with mechanization and commodity culture (the long strips of canvas were meant to be sold by the meter to galleries and collectors), but at the same time it registered resistant forms of bodily authenticity and autonomy in a world of increased repetition and regularity. The traces applied by the artists, such as the various fingerprints found on the rolls, seem to suggest the importance of the hand in any mechanical process of production. As Asger Jorn, referring to the work of Gallizio and, especially, to the nineteenth-century British art critic and social thinker John Ruskin, argued in those years, “[man] always remains the living and vivifying center of all the techniques that he invents: no machine can diminish the importance of the hand and of the most primitive tools that it uses—hammer, scissor, needle—*without at the same time diminishing the importance of man himself.*”²²

The idea of quantitative production, of creating huge quantities of

art to be used to transform a public environment, can also be read as an attempt to undermine the rapid co-optation of avant-garde art by elite galleries. Indeed, at that time, the individual surrealist object was no longer the subversive force the artists wished it to be but had become a commodity of a special sort, one integrated into an economic circuit of patronage, collecting, speculation, investment, and private exhibition.²³

Debord and the Anxious Legacies of Surrealism

Guy Debord, who came into contact with Gallizio through Jorn in the mid-1950s, was initially sympathetic to the laboratory project but was also acutely aware of the risk of associating himself with yet another form of neosurrealist art, a prospect that led him to adopt an extremely ambivalent attitude toward the Italian group of artists. Debord wrote to Gallizio, over the course of a few months, dozens of letters prescribing a specific course of action to foil the surrealists in Paris. Coincidentally, he developed a strategic collaboration with the Brussels neosurrealist group gravitating to the review *Les lèvres nues* (animated by Marcel Mariën in collaboration with the writer and biochemist Paul Nougé, both of whom had broken from Breton's group). Contrary to Gallizio and Jorn, who were critical of some aspects of surrealism but did not necessarily seek a break with it, Debord multiplied the references to surrealism only to publicly distinguish the SI from its predecessor. Some of his comments on the aporias of the surrealist program exposed in the "Report on the Construction of Situations" published after the conference of Cosio d'Arroschia in 1957—in particular on its political failures and its gradual commodification—were valid and should be appreciated as more than mere self-promotion. However, the young Debord's attitude vis-à-vis surrealism, especially toward its leader, was profoundly anxious, which sometimes hindered his judgment and led him to adopt schismatic and polemical attitudes.²⁴ His interventions during the early days of the SI were intentional misinterpretations in which the precursor is regarded as a naive over-idealizer. A good example is Debord's polemical statement presented at the debate "Le surréalisme est-il mort ou vivant?" held in May 1958 in Paris (the title of this event, "Is surrealism dead or alive?" was chosen by the organizer, Noël Arnaud). On a tape recorder, the impassive voice of the young situationist spokesman answered the organizer's question:

Surrealist dreams are mere bourgeois impotence, artistic nostalgia, and a refusal to envisage the liberating use of our era's superior technological means. Seizing such means for use in collective,

concrete experimentation with new environments and behaviors is the start of a cultural revolution that cannot exist apart from these means.²⁵

Avant-garde circles have long proclaimed overnight revolutions and erected straw figures only to knock them down. To unpack the significance of Debord's debate with the surrealists and to see the various historical events that lurk behind it, one must look beyond the flat tone of Debord's dismissive intervention, which was meant to shock the audience (composed of young surrealist sympathizers such as Jean-Jacques Lebel, as well as older members such as Benjamin Péret), to crystallize sides, and to stake out polemics. For instance, why conflate surrealism with a rejection of technology? While it was not the most "futuristic" movement of the interwar period—especially compared to the radical "laboratory constructivist" and productivist strands of modernism, which advocated transforming the artist into a revolutionary cultural "producer" directly involved with the mechanization and industrialization of society—the surrealists did not restrict themselves to the occult, to the "primitive," to the obsolete, or to the intricacies of the biological and the zoological universe in their unending pursuit of the *merveilleux*. Contrary to Debord's suggestion, they made abundant and productive use of photography, design, and cinema. The founding image of surrealism, formulated by the Comte de Lautréamont (Isidore Lucien Ducasse), is itself a conjunction of technological objects: beauty is described as "the chance juxtaposition of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table."²⁶ Breton, in the pages of *La révolution surréaliste* and elsewhere, frequently conducted serious *enquêtes* (inquiries) or made metaphorical use of scientific images and terminology.²⁷ In his "Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality" of 1924, Breton even goes so far as to highlight the possible technological extensions of surrealism in order to undermine bourgeois utilitarianism, speaking of "idle machines of a very scientific construction," of "plans for immense, unbuildable cities," and of "absurd automatons, perfected to the last degree, which would function like nothing else on earth."²⁸ After the Second World War, for example in the catalog of the 1947 *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, many surrealists, young and old, as a reaction against Christian diatribes condemning scientific discoveries that challenged the theist idea of creationism, expressed their enthusiasm for speculative physics that questioned the stability of reality.²⁹

In fact, Debord's statement makes more sense when considered specifically in light of Breton's artistic and political orientation after the Second World War. The goals pursued by the two men are similar yet

subtly different. Whereas Debord wanted to use machines and automation as an instrumental means toward greater human freedom, Breton wanted to appropriate technology and speculative science to sever means-end rationality, which he associated with the ruling-class ideology in the Western world. This negative view of the West, which ran through Breton's oeuvre, was even more powerful during the postwar years. Upon his return to France in 1946 from a difficult exile in North America and an inspiring trip to the Caribbean with Pierre Mabille, Breton was one of the most prominent figures in the Parisian cultural field. He was surrounded by old-time companions like Péret and managed to attract a few newcomers to his entourage. He also episodically intervened in the columns of leftist journals like *Combat* but focused a greater deal of attention on writing poetry and art criticism. In 1957, Breton released *L'art magique*, a lavish, limited-edition art book destined for collectors and bibliophiles.³⁰ In addition, he published articles, alongside Michel Carrouges and others, in the neosurrealist review *Médium: Informations surréalistes*, a small-run publication edited by Jean Schuster and mostly concerned with the occult and with premodern sciences such as alchemy. Even though the surrealists had always had an interest in such fields, the highly specialized and hermetic tone of *Médium* was more marked than that of its predecessors. Indeed, to Debord and his companions, Breton must have appeared to be gradually withdrawing from subversive action and revolutionary politics toward a small cénacle of initiates fascinated with romanticism, the occult, and “magic art,” a step back toward the very elitist aestheticism against which the surrealists had revolted decades earlier. Yet Breton was in no way depoliticized. Along with several members of his group, who felt uneasy about the enthusiasm of many for atomic energy (including Salvador Dalí, whose theories and artworks of the 1950s were a strange mix of nuclear physics, neofascist politics, and Catholic mysticism), Breton joined the progressive Comité de Lutte Anti-Nucléaire, criticizing technocracy in the 1958 tract “Expose the Physicists, Empty the Laboratories” as a new “opium of the people” and condemning the use of the atomic bombs on civilian populations as well as the ongoing nuclear experiments in the Pacific.³¹

Despite Breton and the surrealists' continuing importance, Debord opened the door for the new situationist avant-garde to step in and potentially take its place. Debord attempted on several occasions to promote his own movement by overtly attacking the surrealists for their apparent nostalgia, as he did at the debate on surrealism at the Cercle Ouvert and in several articles in *Internationale situationniste*. However, at this point in time, the group had not really used modern technology to create new environments and stimulate new behaviors, despite what they forcefully

à la peinture industrielle, ce sera le travail en équipe.»

Au moment même où ils présentaient la peinture industrielle à un public stupéfait et aux imbéciles commentaires des journaux — frappés surtout par la présence dans l'exposition de Turin de deux cover-girls vêtues de peinture industrielle — les situationnistes italiens se trouvaient conduits à agir sur un autre terrain.



« Et le chapeau à laquelle ils sont accoutumés est si excessive, que celle qu'il fait ici au fond de l'Afrique les gênerait. »
Fontenaris.

À la fin du mois de juin un jeune peintre milanais, par ailleurs complètement inintéressant, Nuccio Van Guglielmi, dans le but d'attirer l'attention sur sa personne avait légèrement endommagé un tableau de Raphaël (« Le couronnement de la Vierge ») en collant sur le verre qui le protégeait une pancarte manuscrite où l'on pouvait lire : « Vive la révolution italienne ! Debors, le gouvernement clérical ! ». Arrêté sur place, il était aussitôt déclaré fou, sans contestation possible et pour ce seul geste, et interné à l'asile de Milan.

La section italienne de l'Internationale situationniste fut seule à protester par le tract « Défendete la libertà ovunque », paru le 4 juillet seulement, plusieurs imprimeurs italiens ayant par prudence refusé de le tirer.

« Nous constatons, disait ce tract, que le contenu de l'écritéau posé par Guglielmi sur le tableau de Raphaël... exprime l'opinion d'un grand nombre d'Italiens, dont nous sommes.

Nous voulons attirer l'attention sur le fait que l'on interprète... un geste hostile à l'Eglise et aux valeurs culturelles mortes des musées comme une preuve suffisante de folie.

Nous soulignons le péril que constitue un tel précédent pour tous les hommes libres et pour tout le développement culturel et artistique à venir.

La liberté est d'abord dans la destruction des idoles.

Notre appel s'adresse à tous les artistes et les intellectuels d'Italie, pour qu'ils agissent immédiatement en vue de libérer Guglielmi de sa condamnation à vie. Guglielmi peut seulement être condamné aux termes de la loi qui prévoit l'aliénation des biens publics.»

Dans un deuxième tract « Au secours de Van Guglielmi ! », publié en français le 7 juillet, Asger Jorn, au nom de l'IS, appuyait l'action entreprise :

« Les raisons de Guglielmi se trouvent au cœur de l'art moderne, à partir du Futurisme jusqu'à nos jours. Aucun juge, aucun psychiatre, aucun directeur de musée n'est capable de prouver le contraire sans falsification...»

La photo de Raphaël est une falsification officielle envoyée à la presse dans le monde entier. Les dommages réels sur la toile sont si petits qu'ils seraient invisibles sur une reproduction dans un journal. Les lignes qui se voient sur la photo, indiquant une destruction massive de la toile représentent seulement une vitre cassée posée devant le tableau. Même ces lignes sont sur les photos accentuées artificiellement avec du blanc

Left: Illustrated page.
Internationale situationniste,
no. 2 (1958).

Opposite: André Breton.
Automatic Writing. Photomontage
in *Le dictionnaire abrégé du*
surréalisme, 1938.

proclaimed. The Alba experimental laboratory was nothing more than a cellar, and all the members of the group were either writers or artists—with the notable exception of Gallizio. Because he was not trained as an artist in the traditional sense of the term, Debord decided to use him to propel in Paris a view of the SI as significantly more invested in machinist technology than surrealism.

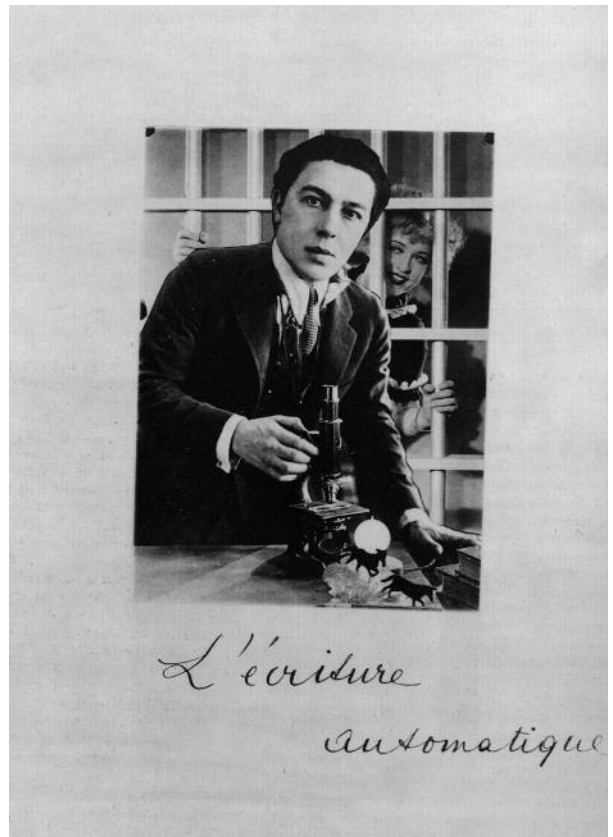
The “photographic theme” of the second issue of *Internationale situationniste* was “daily life at the time of the appearance of the SI” and contained the first portrait of Gallizio published in the journal. The second issue was the only issue to have a “theme,” which suggests that its portraits (most of which, except for Gallizio's, were taken by a friend of René Drouin, the Parisian

gallery owner) were of particular importance to the editor. Of all the available pictures of Gallizio, Debord—who was responsible for the visual layout of the review—chose one taken in the late 1940s, many years before “the appearance of the SI” in 1957. At that point, Gallizio was still conducting pharmaceutical research at the first experimental laboratory near the Institute of Agriculture in Alba. Not only did Debord choose a picture that was a decade old, he also cropped and inverted it: in the original picture, Gallizio is seen facing left, looking straight at a large white cloud emanating from a beaker (the cloud also looks like a blank comic book bubble in which the viewer is invited to write something in order to push the *détournement* further, to reactivate the image and put it back into play). Although the subjective intentions behind Debord's *détournement* and the subsequent manipulations of this particular picture are unclear (and perhaps they are irrelevant to our discussion), they generate an interesting visual parallel between Gallizio's photograph and a famous self-portrait of Breton named *Automatic Writing* published in the *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* of 1938. Debord seems to be not so much comparing Gallizio's role in the SI to that of Breton (because Debord, not Gallizio, was decidedly the authoritative head of the situationist movement) as comparing the surrealist and the situationist view of science and technology.

“Industrial painting” and *détournement* were to Debord what “automatic writing” was to Breton, and they allowed Debord to stage a break from his immediate predecessor. The place of automatic creations in surrealism is much more complex than this, but according to the canonical

historiography of the movement established by Breton and reiterated in such books as Maurice Nadeau's *Histoire du surréalisme* of 1944 (with which Debord and the lettrists were intimately familiar), the discovery of the process of automatic writing by Breton and his friend Philippe Soupault proclaimed the break with dada and the beginning of surrealism.³² After a "negative" phase that allegedly led nowhere, Breton thought that the practice of automatic writing could open a new, "positive" phase—a logic similar to that which Debord would later emulate to characterize his own rupture with surrealism, first through the use of *détournement*, then of industrial painting. During the early days of the surrealist movement, Breton often resorted to technological and scientific metaphors to describe the "constructive" process of automatic writing. He first associated it with photography: "automatic writing, which appeared at the end of the 19th century, is a true *photography of thought*."³³ A few years after his experiments with Soupault, Breton even compared, in the *Manifeste du surréalisme*, the users of automatism to "appareils enregistreurs" (recording instruments)—the same machines Debord and the situationists would later use to deliver their public speeches *against* surrealist automatism.³⁴ In the photomontage entitled *Automatic Writing*, Breton, elegantly dressed, depicts himself in front of a microscope, another scientific visualization device. He is seen looking away from the oculus in surprise as strange creatures start running out from under the lens. A woman-muse, dressed as the poet's maid, is held captive in an iron cage next to him.

The setting in which Gallizio appears is quite different. He is seen as a man with a well-trimmed mustache in a white lab coat surrounded by dozens of bottles, vials, test tubes, and other scientific paraphernalia. He is working in a clean, well-lighted laboratory setting—quite the opposite of the real situationist laboratory in Gallizio's cavernous basement. A short caption, an unidentified quotation from Bernard Le Bovier (or Le Bouyer) de Fontenelle (taken from his scientific book *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* published in 1686) is added under the portrait: "And the heat to which they are accustomed is so excessive, that the one here in the midst of Africa would freeze them."³⁵ The quotation may have been chosen in reference to the high temperature of the laboratory when



the industrial paintings were being dried. However, the choice of this particular book is in itself not innocent. In his *Entretiens*, which is mostly about the utopian island of Ajoia, Fontenelle attacks the devotees of the “false Marvelous . . . [who] only admire nature, because they believe it to be a kind of magic of which they understand nothing.”³⁶ Although the practice of automatic writing appears to the viewer as a romanticized and individualistic form of pseudo-scientific inquiry into the marvelous (the small creatures under the microscope seem to be fleeting apparitions), industrial painting is presented as a conscious and systematic use of the laboratory (Gallizio is scrupulously looking at and manipulating his instruments). This picture appears after a series of essays advocating the use of modern technology as both a way out of the surrealist *merveilleux* and a way to free modern society from the constraints of productive work in order to establish a utopian society based on play, what was to be referred to as the advent of *homo ludens*, after the book by the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, which was also a favorite reference of the surrealists, in particular Roger Caillois (*Les jeux et les hommes*) and Breton (who wrote an article on the book in 1954 in *Médium*).

Debord's choice to “detourn” an older picture of Gallizio dressed as a scientist, instead of as the dandy he really was, also contributed to the performative image of the situationist group as one benefiting from both the theoretical means and the technological resources that would allow it to put its ideas into practice and to carry out its revolutionary program. The choice also suggested a strategic historical lineage, one that claimed as its precedent not automatic writing, with all of its occultist undertones, but the collective surrealist games of *cadavre exquis* and the Cobra collaborative paintings, which sought partially to mimic industrial organization in order to subvert it. Finally, Gallizio's portrait could be read as an ironic comment on the title of Breton's self-portrait: in an article for the first issue of *Internationale situationniste*, Debord notes that the progress of scientific research techniques “are assuming a Surrealist appearance,” alluding to the recent programming of a robot from the University of Manchester that wrote a love letter “that could be mistaken for an attempt at automatic writing by a Surrealist of little talent.”³⁷

The Cavern of Antimatter

At the time that the second issue of *Internationale situationniste* came out in December 1958, Debord was, along with his wife Michèle Bernstein, taking an active part in the organization of Gallizio's exhibition of industrial paintings at René Drouin's fashionable gallery on Rue Visconti in the neighborhood of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. The main

difference of this new exhibition (compared to the more traditional ones previously held at the Bar La Méthode owned by Debord and Bernstein, as well as at the Notizie and Van de Loo galleries in Italy and West Germany) was the situationists' decision to cover the entire gallery space—whose white walls were normally adorned with paintings by artists such as Jean Dubuffet and Wifredo Lam—with 145 meters of “industrial paintings.” Indeed, Debord and Bernstein pushed the owner (whom they considered an “enemy”) to allow them to “détourn” the gallery and convert it into a synesthetic environment. In a letter to Gallizio, Debord meticulously describes the different steps that would lead to the exhibition:

1) Fabrication of rolls of industrial painting (small canvases) intended to cover *every wall* of the Drouin gallery—of which I incessantly assess the surface and take down the exact measurements.

2) Fabrication of a roll of *industrially painted paper*, intended to be cut into equal parts, folded in two, and sold on the day of your vernissage at the Drouin Gallery.

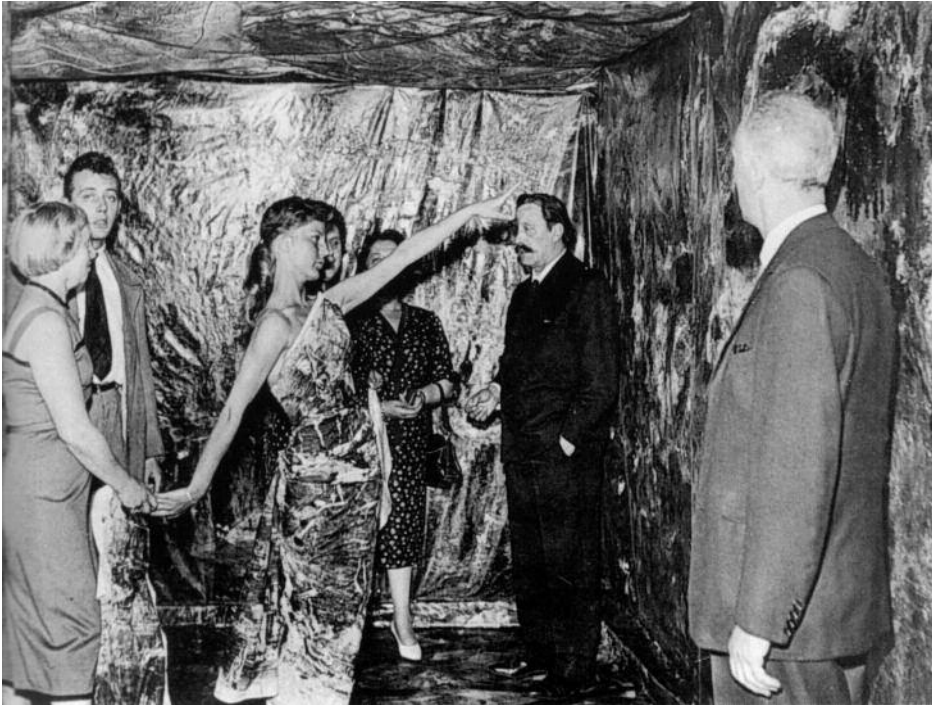
3) Fabrication of large panels of *populit* covered in resin, iron, and every new material you showed us your experience with here.

4) Study new perfumes and organization of the olfactory atmosphere of the gallery (pleasant-unusual).

5) Preparation of a *new aperitif*.

6) Urgent purchase of useful music.³⁸

In his correspondence with Gallizio, Drouin reluctantly accepted this proposal, which Debord clearly intended as a criticism of the dominant mode of art exhibition of the time. According to the situationists, the rolls of industrial paintings were to be presented less as art objects than as technological products used to “create situations” disruptive of everyday life. Yet, the paintings remained mostly confined to traditional art market spaces and networks, in particular private galleries, despite Bernstein's previous claims that Gallizio's “sales take place preferably outdoors,” “in small shops and large department stores.”³⁹ In the event, the gallery space literally submerged the visitors. By penetrating into this synesthetic dark cave, one could see the walls entirely covered by colorful abstract shapes and also hear the ambient sounds of Walter Olmo and Gege Cocito's modified Theremin making feedback noises as the visitors moved around the gallery (an idea to which Debord was opposed because it was too “confusing” and too close to Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète*).⁴⁰ The visitor could also smell the powerful stench of recently dried paint mixed with herbal perfumes, incense, and various balsams, or drink the aperitif devised by the Italian scientist, a likely reference to Yves Klein's exhibition *Le Vide* (The Void), held in April 1958 at the Galerie Iris Clert,



where blue cocktails were served and where the gallery walls were “sensitized” by “the artist’s mere presence.”⁴¹

Gallizio chose the title “Cavern of Antimatter” to underline both the ambiguity of the site and its immediate connection to surrealism: the gallery space evoked a postapocalyptic ruin, a prehistoric grotto, and a theoretical physics lair. The Cavern—in its delirious mix of technological fervor and primitivist anxieties—was an uncanny space. It blurred life and death, vital regeneration and industrial reification, utopian art and commodity culture. In Gallizio’s writing, destruction is always the precondition for construction: “My paintings/*continuous destruction*/ the only way to construct the gesture.”⁴² On the invitation card, Gallizio proclaimed that the energies emanating from the ground and the ceiling of this synesthetic environment were, like “matter” and “antimatter,” to collide with one another. However, instead of producing a burst of destructive electromagnetic energy called “annihilation radiation,” as the actual theory of antimatter then had it, this imaginary collision was supposed to create a regenerative provisional reality, a primitive cavern that the artist allegedly called the “uterus of the world.”⁴³ The models who paraded at the opening are presented by the male demiurge both as figures of regeneration after destruction and as provocative and sexually charged subjects used to advertise art commodities for sale. Indeed, the “significant by-product of this space of annihilation” was supposed to be “the creation of a provisional subjectivity presented in the *feminine*”—specifically as models who were naked but for long strips of industrial painting and who wandered around the gallery.⁴⁴ Used as clothing, the industrial paintings tried to renegotiate the traditional boundaries between architecture and the human body. The body kinetics increased the dynamic effect of the painterly composition on the walls. In such an “archetypal” or “primitive” setting, the psychological effects of the

colorful industrial paintings could, according to the Italian situationist, be extended to all realms of life.

Whereas Debord tried to organize the event primarily as a way to critique postwar modernist housing and especially to attack the surrealists on their privileged ground (the art gallery), Gallizio had an altogether different understanding. His views were influenced first and foremost by surrealist theories of architecture. If indeed he referred to the regenerative Cavern using highly gendered metaphors—that is, as evocative of lost primal states and of sexual plenitude—Gallizio was most likely favorably alluding to the utopian psychoanalytic theorizations of architecture by Tristan Tzara and Roberto Matta published in the review *Minotaure* in the 1930s. Tzara and Matta echoed Breton, describing modernist functionalism as “the most unhappy dream of the collective unconscious.”⁴⁵ These surrealists imagined that for people to supersede their alienated state under capitalism, they must rediscover the “intra-uterine space,” the curvilinear, biomorphic, libidinal, and soft forms that were repressed by the “castrating” ideology of modernism.⁴⁶ The reference to the theory of antimatter, first theorized by Paul Adrien Maurice Dirac in 1928, seems to be another favorable allusion to the work of Salvador Dalí, who in 1959 published his “Anti-matter Manifesto,” in which he discussed a major turn in his artistic practice. After his surrealist period, during which he felt himself successful in visually translating Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic model to create “the iconography of the interior, the world of the marvelous,” Dalí, in paintings like *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory* of 1952, looked to Werner Heisenberg, one of the founders of quantum mechanics, in order to unravel new mysteries: “Today the exterior world—that of physics—has transcended the one of psychology. . . . It is with pi-mesons and the most gelatinous and indeterminate neutrinos that I want to paint the beauty of the angels and of reality.”⁴⁷ Gallizio enthusiastically wrote in his personal diary that he hoped to pick up where these surrealist projects left off. His objective, formulated as a series of aphorisms, suggested moving away from theory toward “daydreaming” (*rêver les yeux ouverts*), or constructing and living out new passions in reality:

Construction is the construction of new
passions
It is a question of sign
The sign is the structuring of a passion
in the magical sense
In the state of ecstasy one likewise
forgets that emptiness is

a state of . . .

The act is a prison that transfers the

risks

State of emptiness toward state of

desire

Translated into *sensual* state after

ecstasy

And just as love is not at all a question of speed

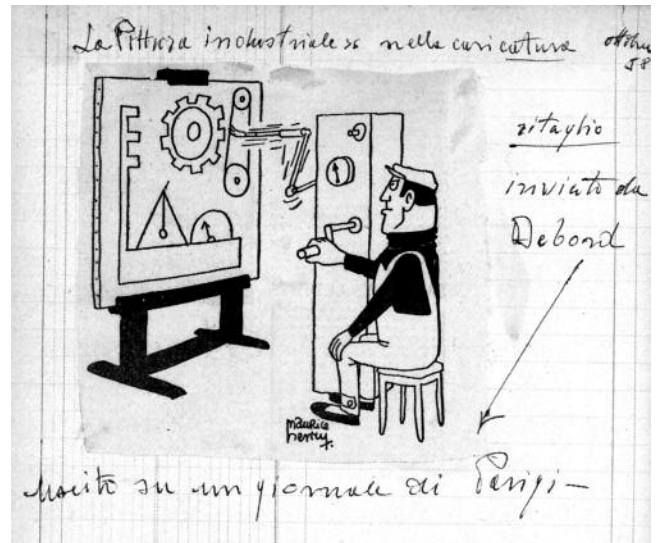
Time does not exist on the contrary it is

Daydreaming

Or upside-down surrealism⁴⁸

Largely because of Gallizio's overly enthusiastic attitude toward these surrealist ideas (in particular those of Dalí, whom Debord considered politically unconscionable), Debord's advocacy of industrial painting proved to be short-lived. In fact, soon after the Cavern event, which was a commercial success, Debord excluded Gallizio and all the other members of the Italian experimental laboratory from the SI. The official reason was that they did not sever all ties to the art market and were being "co-opted"—a rather aberrant excuse, considering that Debord coorganized the Cavern event and was encouraging Gallizio, only a few months before, to sell "quite expensively" his industrial paintings to the American Carnegie Institute.⁴⁹ Beyond these official and somewhat self-serving reasons, which concealed personal tensions and intellectual ambitions, is surely Debord's gradual realization of the impossibility of superseding surrealism through so-called technological means, as well as the extreme difficulty of enacting social change through the neo-avant-garde art market.

Industrial painting seemed like an exciting field of research at first, but as the Cavern event confirmed, it quickly became another form of collectible art unable to disrupt everyday events beyond the gallery space. The fact that the paintings were produced in vast quantities did not produce any kind of "inflation" on the art market as the situationists had hoped. Indeed, Gallizio's rolls became popular almost instantly and were bought by prominent collectors such as Michel Tapié, Peggy Guggenheim, and Willem Sandberg. Around the same time as the Cavern exhibition, similar types of artistic performances began to be produced in Western Europe and Japan. Just one month after the Cavern of Antimatter show, the neosurrealist exhibition *Eros* opened at the Galerie Daniel Cordier in Paris. The gallery was entirely redecorated in such a way as to evoke an uncanny and uterine passageway—a similar tactic to the one used by Gallizio at Drouin's gallery. More importantly, Jean



Tinguely, Yves Klein, and Piero Manzoni achieved an extreme vogue with their neo-dada performances challenging traditional notions of artistic production and exhibition. In 1958, Tinguely was already working on his “painting machine,” his anti-utilitarian *Méta-matic no. 17*, but it was not shown until the Paris Biennale in October 1959, five months after the Cavern event. Debord, proud that the situationists beat Tinguely to the idea by a few months, sent Gallizio a caricature (probably cropped from the newspaper *Combat*) by the surrealist Maurice Henry of an artist dressed like a worker painting with a machine. (The caricature might allude to Tinguely but more likely alludes to Jorn’s first mentor, Fernand Léger, who often wore workers’ clothes in his studio.) Debord also “détourned” part of an article published in *L’express* in October 1959 discussing a “painting machine” recently exhibited in Paris, reprinting it in *Internationale situationniste* as an epigraph to the French version of Gallizio’s manifesto, “Discours sur la peinture industrielle et sur un art unitaire applicable.” While the “painting machine” is Tinguely’s and not Gallizio’s, Debord was careful not to include any mention of the name of the original artist to whom the article alluded. Thus, while distancing himself from Gallizio’s late surrealism, Debord was also interested in showing former situationist artists to be in advance of the neodadaists coming up through the ranks.

On the other side of the artistic spectrum, some neoconstructivist artists benefiting from corporate and state commissions would also pick up on the technological themes exposed in the first installments of *I.S.* in articles such as the 1958 “The Situationists and Automation.” After the situationists’ *détournement* of Breton’s famous aphorism on “convulsive beauty,” Abraham Moles—a cybernetician who was briefly in contact with the members of the SI—reused the formula to promote his vision of a technocratic integration of the arts: “The aesthetician will be prospective, or he will not be at all: his role joins with that of the artist in an intellectual amplification of art based on an aesthetic structuralism of fragments of the environment.”⁵⁰ All of these historical and personal factors contributed to the normalization of the critical impact of Gallizio’s art and architectural proposals. Finally, at exactly the time he excluded the members of the Italian section, Debord was developing a close and productive relationship with Henri Lefebvre, the philosopher and sociologist from whom he borrowed the idea of a “critique of everyday life.” Out of this collaboration—which was to end, a few years later, as abruptly



Programme préalable au mouvement situationniste.

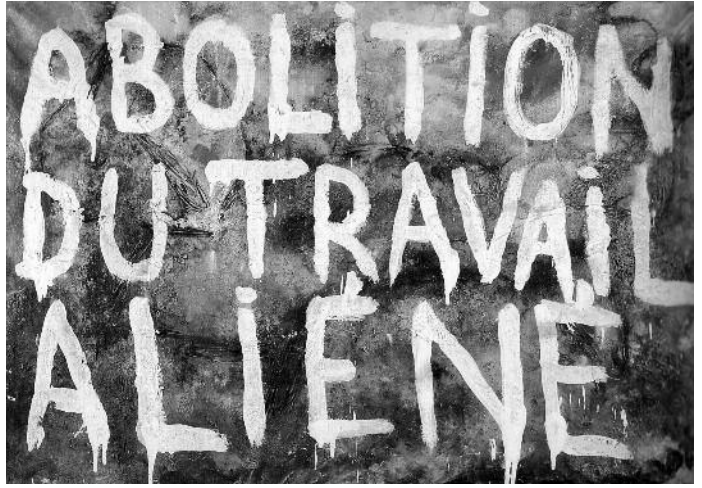
Cette inscription, sur un mur de la rue de Seine, remonte aux premiers mois de 1953 (une inscription voisine qui relève de la politique traditionnelle aide à dater avec la plus sûre objectivité le tracé de celle qui nous intéresse : appelant à une manifestation contre le général Ridgway, elle ne peut donc être postérieure à mai 1952). L'inscription que nous reproduisons ici semble être la plus importante trace jamais relevée sur le site de Saint-Germain-des-Prés, comme témoignage du mode de vie particulier qui a tenté de s'affirmer là.

as the one with Gallizio—grew a powerful critique of contemporary capitalist society, especially of urbanism and of “the production of space,” which led the situationists to move further away from the art scene.

Despite his gradual public rejection of neo-avant-garde tactics, Debord produced one last performance that should be read as a final tribute to his former comrade Gallizio and as a salute to the surrealists. After the fourth issue of *Internationale situationniste* in June 1960, the situationists gradually moved away from antisurrealist polemics and even became close to Breton’s left libertarian political positions. For instance, Debord and Bernstein, as well as Breton, cosigned the “Manifeste des 121” in 1960 against the colonial domination of Algeria, and Debord published in 1962, along with Jorn, the *Mutant* tract against the construction of atomic bomb shelters. At an antinuclear manifestation named Destruction of RSG-6, which opened on June 22, 1963, at the Exi Gallery in Odense, Denmark, Debord showed (alongside mock *nouveau réaliste* thermonuclear maps [*Termonukleare kartografier*] of Europe by J.V. Martin and plaster tableaux with toy soldiers by Bernstein) a series of *Directives* that were to be followed by the true “initiates” of the situationist “secret society.” To have access to them, the visitor had to pass through a long passageway, much like in a ritual.⁵¹ The *Directives* were short, hand-painted inscriptions on canvas—evocative of Debord’s famous graffiti on rue de la Seine, “Ne travaillez jamais” (Never work)—which, poignantly, appeared in 1953 on the same street where Breton had sold surrealist objects at the Galerie Gradiva in the 1930s at the height of surrealism’s commercialization. All of the *Directives*, such as *Réalisation de la philosophie*, were painted with black lettering on white canvases except one. *Abolition du travail aliéné* was hand painted in white on a colorful piece of Gallizio’s industrial painting. As with the blank comic-book bubble featured in Gallizio’s portrait that invited future *détournements*, Debord used graffiti to reactivate the artwork. This unsigned piece of

Opposite: Photograph of a graffiti attributed to Debord on Rue de la Seine, Paris. *Internationale situationniste*, no. 8 (1963).

Right: Guy Debord. *Abolition du travail aliéné*, 1963. Graffiti on a piece of industrial painting.



industrial painting had become a palimpsest, an intervention that should be read both as a celebration of Gallizio's (and, by extension, of Breton and the surrealists') past attempt to supersede painting through a collective creative process and as a reminder of the alienated quality of all artistic objects.⁵² This performance is a tessera in both senses of the word: it is a token of recognition but also an anxious suggestion that the predecessors have failed to go far enough. The revolution may have gained ground in the Cavern of Antimatter and then the art world, but it now had to be reactivated in the streets. In a few years, the events of May 1968 would offer that opportunity.

Notes

I would like to thank my advisor, Caroline A. Jones, for her steadfast help, encouragement, and prodding; my colleagues in the History, Theory, and Criticism of Art and Architecture program at MIT, particularly Anneka Lenssen, who edited an earlier version of this paper; as well as Robin A. Greeley and my fellow students from the fall 2007 surrealism graduate seminar at Harvard University, whose insights greatly improved this essay. Thanks also to Tom McDonough, Branden W. Joseph, Karen Kurczynski, Steven Harris, Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Jean-Marie Apostolides, and Alexandre Trudel.

1. Tom McDonough, introduction to *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), xii.

2. Guy Debord, "La lutte pour le contrôle des nouvelles techniques de conditionnement," *Internationale situationniste* 1 (June 1958): 6–8.

3. Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency" (1957), in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, ed. McDonough, 29–50.

4. Other studies on the fraught relationship between these two avant-garde movements include Tom McDonough, "Delirious Paris: Mapping as a Paranoiac-Critical Activity," *Grey Room* 19 (Spring 2005): 6–21; Boris Donné, "Debord & Chtcheglov, Bois & Charbons: La dérive et ses sources surréalistes occultées," *Mélusine: Cahiers du Centre de Recherche sur le Surréalisme* 28 (2008): 109–124; Jérôme Duwa, *Surréalistes et situationnistes, vie parallèles: Histoire et documents* (Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2008).

5. I use Caroline A. Jones's useful distinction between *performative* ("that aspires to, or structurally resembles, an industrial process, and/or a self-presentation on the part of the artist that implies a collaboratively generated technological solution or mechanistic goal") and *iconic* ("an image, figure, or representation that is somehow indexed to technology, to the industrial order, or to the machine") technological modes of artistic production. See Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 55.

6. Maria Teresa Roberto, "Pinot Gallizio, pittore della materia e dell'antimatiera," in *Pinot Gallizio: Catalogo generale delle opere, 1953–64*, exh. cat., ed. Maria Teresa Roberto (Milan: Mazzotta, 2001), 24 (my translation).

7. Max Bill, "The Bauhaus Idea: From Weimar to Ulm," *Architect's Year Book* 5 (1953): 29–32. On this specific debate, see Nicola Pezolet, *Le Bauhaus Imaginiste contre un Bauhaus Imaginaire: La polémique autour de la question du fonctionnalisme entre Asger Jorn et Max Bill* (Quebec: Université Laval, 2008). See also Dieter Schwarz, "Une rencontre entre un 'p'tit suisse' et un 'grand danois': Max Bill und Asger Jorn im Streit um das neue Bauhaus," in *Max Bill*, exh. cat. (Winterthur, Switzerland: Niggli, 2008), 109–121.

8. Asger Jorn, "Contre le fonctionnalisme," in *Pour la forme: Ébauche d'une méthodologie des arts* (1958; Paris: Allia, 2001), 22–33. (Éditions Internationale Situationniste was the original publisher.)

9. Giuseppe Gallizio, "Opening Speech of the 1956 Congress of Free Artists," in *Pinot Gallizio: Il laboratorio della scrittura*, ed. Giorgina Bertolino (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2005), 130.

10. Giorgina Bertolino, "Gli anni della pittura industriale, 1957–1959," in *Pinot Gallizio: Catalogo generale*, ed. Roberto, 100.

11. Sandro Ricaldone, "La force de l'instabilité: L'aventure incomplète du Bauhaus imaginiste," in *Figures de la négation: Avant-gardes du dépassement de l'art*, exh. cat.,

ed. Yan Ciret (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne, 2003), 90.

12. The documentary, *Pinot Gallizio*, was produced by Radio Televisione Italiana in 1963. A transcript appears in *Pinot Gallizio: Il laboratorio*, ed. Bertolino, 101.

13. Maurice Fréchuret, *La machine à peindre* (Paris: Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 1994), 120. The artistic techniques used by Gallizio, even though they are from a later era and stem from a distinctively avant-garde context, are similar to those of the late-nineteenth-century artist Charles Maurin, who, according to Fréchuret, also used rudimentary machines to vaporize pigments onto the canvas.

14. Frances Stracey, "Pinot-Gallizio's 'Industrial Painting': Towards a Surplus of Life," *Oxford Art Journal* 28 (2005): 397.

15. Giuseppe Gallizio, "Undated Manuscript, ca. 1958," in *Pinot Gallizio: Il laboratorio*, ed. Bertolino, 34; emphasis and quotation marks in original.

16. André Breton, *Les vases communicants* (Paris: Editions des Cahiers Libres, 1932).

17. André Breton, "Surrationalisme," in *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* (Paris: José Corti, 1991), 26 (my translation). See also, Gaston Bachelard, "Surrationalisme," *Inquisitions (Organe du Groupe d'Études pour la Phénoménologie Humaine)* 1 (June 1936): 1–6.

18. André Breton, "The Political Position of Today's Art," in *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 231.

19. Walter L. Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 291. For more on Bachelard's complex relationship to surrealism, see Gavin Parkinson, *Surrealism, Art and Modern Science: Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, Epistemology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 47–116. On the politics of surrealist automatism in that specific period, see Steven Harris, *Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s: Art, Politics, and the Psyche* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

20. While it would exceed the limits of this essay, it would be interesting to further explore how the situationists' ideas of inflationary artistic production might be connected to the economic ideas of Georges Bataille who, in *La part maudite* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1949), developed a provocative theory of *dépense* (expenditure).

21. Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 152.

22. Asger Jorn, "La lisse . . . jouet d'artistes . . ." in *Discours aux pingouins et autres écrits* (Paris: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 2001), 189; emphasis added (my translation).

23. Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.

24. Although Debord's debt to the surrealist leader is clearly visible in his youthful letters to Ivan Chhtcheglov and later on in his personal correspondence with the artist Annie Le Brun, only at the very end of his life did Debord acknowledge to the public his respect for Breton. See, for example, his 1984 essay on the mysterious death of Gérard Lebovici: Guy Debord, *Considérations sur l'assassinat de Gérard Lebovici* (Paris: Champ libre, 1985).

25. Guy Debord, "Contribution to the Debate 'Is Surrealism Dead or Alive?'" in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, ed. McDonough, 68. The original French edition, transcribed from the original tape recording and slightly longer than the transcription reprinted in the American anthology, can be found in *Textes et documents situationnistes, 1957–1960*, ed. Gérard Berréby (Paris: Allia, 2004), 86.

26. Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 217.

27. The stripped-down layout of *La révolution surréaliste* was based on *La nature*, the

French scientific journal aimed at the popularization of science and founded in the nineteenth century by Gaston Tissandier, the scientist and adventurer. In turn, *La révolution surréaliste* was one of Debord's main models for the journal *Internationale situationniste*.

28. André Breton, "Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality," in *André Breton: What Is Surrealism?* ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York: Pathfinder, 1978), 26.

29. *Le Surréalisme en 1947* (Paris: Éditions Pierre à Feu, 1947). For a discussion of this book, see Parkinson, 206.

30. André Breton, *L'art magique* (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1957).

31. André Breton et al., "Démasquez les physiciens, videz les laboratoires," in *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives, 1922–1969*, ed. José Pierre (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1982), 172.

32. Maurice Nadeau, *Histoire du surréalisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 11–42.

33. André Breton, "Max Ernst," in *The Lost Steps* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 60; emphasis added.

34. André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 28. According to biographer Mark Polizzotti, Breton, who indiscriminately considered the postwar popularization of science and technology as simply the latest in a "succession of religious or political obscurantisms," made an exception "for one piece of modern technology, the tape recorder, which became a favorite toy at around this time." In 1924 Breton compared this machine to automatism, and Debord would later use it for his situationist conference on surrealism (as well as for other events). To "supersede" his opponent, Debord turned not only to the ideas of Breton on automatism but also generated his own tools and metaphors against him. Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1995), 599.

35. "L'activité de la section Italienne," *Internationale situationniste* 2 (December 1958): 29.

36. Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Paris: Éditions de l'Aube, 1990), 24 (my translation).

37. "Amère victoire du surréalisme," *Internationale situationniste* 1 (June 1958): 3–4.

38. Guy Debord, "Letter to Gallizio, January 30, 1958," in *Pinot Gallizio: Il laboratorio*, ed. Bertolino, 64; emphasis in original.

39. Michèle Bernstein, "Elogio di Pinot-Gallizio," in *Textes et documents situationnistes*, 65 (my translation).

40. Guy Debord, *Correspondance*, vol. 1 (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1999), 205. That Debord felt that way is odd because he was previously enthusiastic about the Theremin, which he had hoped to show in *La Méthode* a few months before. In the letter to Gallizio, he also mentions "useful music." Debord was somewhat conventional in his musical appreciation, preferring the guitar works of the young Nouvelle Vague singer Florencie, who performed at *La Méthode*, to the "abstract" music produced using a modern machine. This attitude complicates even further Debord's public enthusiasm for technology's revolutionary potential.

41. Tom McDonough, *"The Beautiful Language of my Century": Reinventing the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945–1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 128. On the relationship between Debord and Klein, see Kaira M. Cabañas, "Yves Klein's Performative Realism," *Grey Room* 31 (Spring 2008): 6–31.

42. Giuseppe Gallizio, "From an Applicable Art to a Quantistic Art," in *Pinot Gallizio: Il laboratorio*, ed. Bertolino, 189 (emphasis in original).

43. While I could not find the original source of this quote in the anthology of his

writings, Gallizio was first cited as alluding to the cavern as “the uterus of the world” in Libero Andreotti, “Introduction: The Urban Politics of the Internationale Situationiste (1957–1972),” in *Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism*, ed. Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa (Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 1996), 30. Gallizio’s use of that expression is also discussed in Frances Stracey, “The Caves of Gallizio and Hirschhorn,” *October* 116 (Spring 2006): 93. In fact, the person who first used that metaphor may have been the art historian Francesco Poli, and not Gallizio himself. See Francesco Poli, *Pinot Gallizio nell’Europa dei dissimmetrici* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1992), 13. This matter deserves further inquiry.

44. Stracey, 93.

45. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays on the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 150. Vidler is here paraphrasing Breton’s 1935 lecture “Situation of the Surrealist Object,” in which he condemns Le Corbusier’s architecture. See André Breton, *Position politique du surréalisme* (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1935). On the surrealist object, see also André Breton, “Crise de l’objet,” *Cahiers d’Art* 1–2 (1936): 21–26. In this influential article, Breton encourages the surrealists to borrow freely from scientific terminology, anticipating Gallizio’s work by two decades. The text is also illustrated with a photograph by Man Ray, which depicts a “mathematical object” that he discovered at the Institut Poincaré, a French research institute of mathematics and theoretical physics.

46. Tristan Tzara, “D’un certain automatisme du goût,” *Minotaure* 3–4 (1933): 84. Interestingly, Tzara also alludes to the cavern as a form of primal, regenerative architecture. This text was well known to Jorn and probably Gallizio as well. For more on surrealist architecture, see also Roberto Matta, “Mathématique sensible—Architecture du temps,” *Minotaure* 11 (1938): 43.

47. Salvador Dalí, “Anti-matter Manifesto,” in *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*, ed. Haim Finkelstein (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 366. This text was originally published in English in the catalog for an exhibition that took place at the Carstairs Gallery, New York, from December 1958 to January 1959—only a few months before the Cavern exhibition.

48. Giuseppe Gallizio, “Untitled Notes,” in *Pinot Gallizio: Il laboratorio*, ed. Bertolino, 105 (emphasis in original).

49. Debord, *Correspondance*, 125–126.

50. Abraham Moles and Élisabeth Rohmer, *La psychologie de l’espace* (Paris: Casterman, 1972), 118; emphasis added (my translation).

51. For an excellent article on Debord’s enigmatic *Directives* as coded messages, see Boris Donné, “Ne révélez jamais,” in *Figures de la négation*, ed. Ciret, 27–29.

52. Debord’s decision to alter Gallizio’s industrial painting produced quite interesting and unpredictable results. According to Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, “in accordance with the Situationists’ disdain for art, the directive was priced at 300 Danish Kroner, while the painting itself without Debord’s slogan had been priced at 6000 Danish Kroner.” The altered painting then generated a small scandal in the Danish press. In the daily newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* the art critic Virtus denounced Debord for his “illegal” use of Gallizio’s painting. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, e-mail message to author, 24 February 2009. This work, which became one of the most famous artworks produced by the situationists, is now in the private collection of the French neo-avant-garde artist Daniel Buren, an artist whose work Debord detested and often criticized as a symptom of the void of contemporary culture.