

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION ABOUT WORKS OF ART *

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This paper is based on the theoretical considerations set forth in Kindt 1981. It provides an introductory survey of the research being carried out in my project "Normal forms of communication about art". In this project, conversations about works of art (including literature) are analyzed by means of discourse analysis procedures. We have established, on the one hand, that this type of conversation proceeds according to certain socially stereotyped patterns. On the other hand, the introduction of new approaches to empirical research about art as a social phenomenon has become possible. These approaches involve, for example, the determination of the functions of art and of communication about art and the characterization of contradictions in the current ideologies of art.

1. Introductory remarks

The decision to abandon the paradigm of traditional literary studies and to treat literature in the domain of empirical social science instead, no longer requires any further theoretical justification. However, such empirical literary studies must still demonstrate by their results that their theoretical basis is sound and productive. Thus, in my opinion, it is most important to demonstrate that those problems which traditional literary scholarship regards as central can also be dealt with empirically and more successfully than was possible within the traditional framework. One such problem area would be, for example, the topic of fictionality treated in this volume, and more generally the whole field of literary semantics. It is not, however, advisable in such an undertaking to jump headfirst into empirical investigations without previously having considered thoroughly and critically what currently available empirical procedures are best suited to the task of dealing with particular questions. Such critical considerations make it apparent that for just these problems in the field of literary semantics hardly any usable empirical procedures exist. For exam-

* I want to express my thanks to Marilyn Schapiro and Fritz Neubauer for translating this paper into English.

This project was financially supported by the University of Bielefeld (O.Z. 2366).

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ple, the method of asking direct questions about the understanding of a literary text remains questionable because receivers have only an insufficient awareness of their own interpretation procedures (cf. Kindt 1980) and because there may be enormous discrepancies between their everyday theories of understanding and their corresponding everyday practice. In the search for appropriate empirical procedures with which the meaning-constitutive activities of receivers could be determined, I became aware, for reasons which I will not go into here, of the possibilities for employing the theoretical concepts and methods of conversational analysis. The basic semantic postulates of conversational analysis assume that meanings are constituted only within the process of communication and in the case of face-to-face communication participants construct partially new meanings from conventional meaning elements in the process of a joint negotiating interaction. To the extent that the steps in this construction process are explicitly carried out by the participants in the communication, they are empirically ascertainable and thus an approach to the investigation of meanings is made possible. With respect to the field of literature or of art in general, this means that from the analysis of conversations about works of art we can hope to obtain data about the related processes of meaning constitution. These considerations led me to carry out a project in which communication about works of art could be dealt with in a more general way in terms of conversational analysis. This paper is a report on my work in progress on this project.

2. Goals and procedures in the project

Social science-based research into the phenomenon of art should not only take as its appropriate subject area the set of those objects which are accepted as art works by society; it is much more necessary and useful to choose for the subject area the set of all those interaction processes which bear a direct relationship to these art objects (for such a treatment cf. Kindt and Schmidt 1979). This means, in particular, that in addition to the communication act realized by means of a work of art, we must also investigate the communication processes in which the given art objects are spoken about.

In addition to the possibility set forth above of obtaining empirical access to the processes of meaning constitution by means of the analyses of communication about works of art, there is a further special motivation for the investigation of this communication. It is of great interest to study in more empirical detail the social requirements which are the basis for the production and reception of art, or, in more general terms, the social functions of art. The answers that previous researchers have given to this question have either been only hypothetical or partially even normative in character without substantiating the postulated functions as factual realities (cf. Kindt and Schmidt 1979).

Alternatively, inquiries about the function of art are based on direct questioning and these results must be regarded sceptically for the following reasons:

- the questionees apparently frequently reproduce only those stereotypes about the (supposed) functions of art that they have acquired through their socialization,
- functions regarded as socially negative are seldom or never mentioned,
- the participants are often not consciously aware of the actual functions art has in particular situations.

In connection with this research into the functional aspect, I start from the assumption that the analysis of conversation about art can yield important new insights. This assumption gains plausibility from the fact that the methods of conversational analysis have been successfully applied to the functional analysis of many different types of communication. The investigation of the function question has, at the same time, a certain priority over research into the specifics of literary or aesthetic meaning constitution. This arises from the fact that interpretation processes are predominantly context-dependent and therefore, in each case, the basic context conditions must be studied in detail before the empirical investigation of these processes can begin. Going beyond this general insight, it has become clear in investigations of problems of understanding (cf. Kallmeyer and Kindt 1979, Kindt 1980) that the results of interpretation are dependent to a large extent on certain interactionally defined prerequisites for understanding which may have varying degrees of power. It should be apparent that these prerequisites for understanding in the case of the interpretation of works of art are to a large extent determined by precisely what function the interaction with these works of art has.

The first concern of this project is to accumulate as wide a selection of data as possible. This is accomplished by making a large number of tape recordings in the field where, on the one hand, the various branches of art (literature, theater, film, music, fine art) and, on the other hand, as many various discourse preconditions as possible are represented. In particular, recordings are being made of experts' and laymen's conversations as well as conversations of mixed type. In this connection the problem arises that recordings of experts' conversations about art from public presentations and radio or TV programs are much easier to come by than everyday conversations, that conversation situations occurring on location at artistic events frequently produce very bad recordings (e.g. theater intermissions, gallery openings etc.).

The tape recordings acquired in the course of the project are transcribed in extract form. The transcription system used fulfils, on one hand, the requirement that a "normal" reading of the text remains possible, but, on the other hand, it contains symbols for such phenomena as intonation, hesitation and overlapping which may be relevant to the interpretation. The consequent

analysis makes use of certain conversational analysis procedures which were effectively used by, e.g., Kallmeyer 1977.

3. Provisional results

The task of analyzing the transcribed conversations in this project is still in an early stage. Thus the results of our analysis so far must be regarded as provisional. At the same time, however, the results show several interesting tendencies which I would like to sketch out in this article. I intend to consider the following aspects

- peculiarities of interpretation behavior;
- art theory positions;
 form of presentation of art descriptions/evaluations.

In addition to these aspects, in section 4 the complex of questions concerning self-definition and self-presentation will be treated separately.

3.1

Contrary to original expectations, the analysis of the material so far has yielded little of value for the areas of aesthetic or literary semantics. The reason for this is partially the type of conversations recorded so far in which a discussion of concrete interpretations is not in the foreground, but rather the conversation partners are concerned only with describing an overall understanding. One must, however generally, expect – and this corrects my previous assumption – that such conversations in which particular meaning constructions are explicitly introduced and discussed are relatively infrequent. In addition, the expectation based on postulates of current aesthetic theory that the supposed special nature of art would be immediately noticeable in interpretative interaction with works of art must be modified. Apart from the more professional contexts, interpretation behavior turns out to be very “normal”, the suggested interpretations are in no way “extraordinary” in comparison with other communication contexts, and, for example, the fictionality of works of art plays no specially noticeable role. The observation of this normality leads me to the conclusion that the frequently expressed postulate about the uniqueness of interpretative behavior with respect to works of art even by non-professional communication participants must be based more on ideological grounds than on actual participant behavior. (NB: There may be other levels where a more marked specificity and distinctiveness of participant behavior may be observed.) My earlier critique of aesthetic convention and the polyvalence convention (Kindt 1981) used by Schmidt (1980) as a central point

in his characterization of the literary system in society also points in this direction.

The position just formulated emphasizes more generally the assessment that one must not confuse art theory positions with the real empirically determinable given conditions of the processing practice. How great the danger of such a confusion is has also been shown in conversational-analytic investigations in other areas of communication: communication practice and everyday theory about this practice diverge widely from each other, for example, in some areas of education. The reasons for such differentiation between theory and practice lie primarily on two levels:

- (1) The practice is frequently not sufficiently cognitively understood by the communication participants, thus it cannot be adequately described by them. However, a precise cognitive grasp and a verbal description are not required for a successful practice and are thus not expected by society.
- (2) Theoretical positions are established by society partially for purposes of legitimation. Contradictions between theory and practice thus occur of which the participants are also partially aware. Insofar that these theoretical positions in spite of such contradictions appear to be socially necessary, the contradictions are "resolved" with the help of certain socially stereotyped strategies. One can purposely overlook the contradictions or deny them, or present them as unavoidable or declare them as sacred and inviolable.

To elaborate this differentiation between theory and practice let us consider the example of fictionality: the stress on the fictional aspect of literature evidently had the purpose, historically speaking, of protecting writers against certain claims made by society on their work and to limit their responsibility for their utterances and especially for the interpretations of them by others. This stress on the fictional aspect does not mean, however, that fictionality in literature plays a greater role in practice than in other areas of communication. In my opinion, fictionality is a phenomenon which plays a very large role in such fields as playing and learning and thus is not a distinguishing feature of literary systems (cf. Kindt 1981).

The empirical investigation of actual communication behavior with respect to fictionality as well as the acquisition of the corresponding behavior conventions through socialization is discussed by other authors in this volume. In keeping with my argumentation above, the differentiation between theory and practice should be given particular attention in such studies. Thus, although Hurrelmann's work (1981) suggests that primary school children are capable of making considerably sharper theoretical differentiations with respect to the fictional aspect of literature than assumed by Schmidt (1980), this tells us nothing about the effect of fictionality on actual participant behavior. Accord-

ing to my observations, the question spontaneously asked by children of kindergarten age in the act of communication relates only to the distinction between real or not real (in German colloquial language today that would be, *ist das in echt so?* ("is that really so?")) Furthermore, in my opinion, we must demand of empirical investigation that it reflects explicitly that aspect of the function of fictionality relevant for the given interaction context. Only by taking into account this aspect is it possible to answer questions about the effects on the micro-level of interpretation processes.

3.2

On the level of theoretical discussions about art there are several frequently recurring controversial topics. Included here are, for example, the requirement that art be comprehensible or the question of the function of art. Such discussions are well known to us all, thus it seems in mentioning their frequency that nothing new is being said. If, however, we compare a large number of such discussions, then their similarity or stereotypicalness becomes apparent. This stereotypicalness is in striking contradiction to the fact that such discussions are experienced by the participants as spontaneous and also defined as such by both sides. We can surmise about this kind of contrast that the discussions in question actually proceed according to socially regulated and acquired patterns of which the participants themselves are not aware. Such an assumption is based on similar experiences in different interaction contexts. Thus the question arises as to which social functions are involved such that participants express certain art theory positions in these discussions and, at the same time, are not completely aware of the background of these positions.

The complex of problems arising from the preceding question will be made concrete here through the example of the comprehensibility requirement. On the question of the comprehensibility of art various contradictory positions have been advanced. On one hand is the requirement that art should be equally comprehensible to everyone; such as is expressed in the statement of an official of the German Federal Railways:

Aber ich liebe Kunst in allen ihren Ausdrucksformen ah ästhetischen Ausdrucksformen des Schopfungswillens des Menschen eben So war er durch durch Jahrtausende hin für alle Menschen verständlich, und ich kritisiere heute an der Kunst, dass sie oft für den eben nicht gebildeten Menschen ah kunstgebildeten Menschen so unverständlich ist (Radio program from the WDR on 11/10/1979)

[But I love art in all its forms ah aesthetic forms of expression of the creative desire of man That's why it has been understandable to all men for thousands of years and what I criticize today is that art is often so incomprehensible for uneducated ah people, uneducated in art]

On the other hand there are positions which claim that art can never be comprehensible; such as expressed in this version of the approximative com-

ment made by a publisher of experimental literature: *I have never published anything that I have understood* (1978). In between there are positions which give varying weight to which prerequisites one must fulfill for the comprehension of art and which expectations are appropriate to these prerequisites. As contrasting examples I want to quote here the statements of the author Max Bense (1971) and those of a student of German literature (1981). Max Bense stresses the elitism of art:

Wer Kunst verstehen will, der muss genauso viel lernen wie derjenige, der ein Auto konstruiert [] Wer nicht begriffen hat, dass Kunst elitär ist, der soll die Finger davon lassen [] Kunst ist eine schwierige Angelegenheit, genau wie Mathematik. Man muss es gelernt haben. (Cf. Richter-Reichenbach 1977: 126, 129, 141)

[Whoever wants to understand art, must learn just as much as he who wants to construct an automobile [] Whoever has not understood that art is elitist should keep his fingers off it [] Art is a difficult pursuit, just as mathematics. One has to have studied it.]

The student Tilmann expects in contrast that the necessary information for the comprehension of art should be accessible to him without undue hardships:

Ja, das schreckt mich zum Beispiel ab mal in die Kunsthalle irgendwo hinzugehen, weil ich man manche Bilder oder manche Farbkompositionen oder irgendetwas nicht erfassen kann weil das ja eben was nicht Gewohntes ist.

[Yes, it deters me, for example, to go sometimes into a museum somewhere because I you can't grasp some pictures or color compositions or some things because it's something you are not used to.]

To the response of his fellow student Richard:

Ja, dann müsse dir nen Begleitführer kaufen für dreissig Mark oder was wo es sich auch immer

[Well then, you have to buy yourself a guide book for thirty marks or something.]

Tilmann replies with reference to such a high price:

Ja, weil für mich das auch nicht leistbar ist, ne

[Yes, but I just can't afford that, right?]

For such positions there are similarly typical explanations. As in the above quoted statement of the railway official, for example, it is claimed that art in earlier periods was always comprehensible. Or the requirement, for the comprehensibility of art or the introduction of an intermediary for making comprehension possible is justified by the fact that otherwise the social responsibility of art would not be capable of being fulfilled. Numerous demands for the

comprehensibility of art also arise in relation to the price of acquiring art objects. Thus, for example (in 1978), a twenty-nine year old turner expressed the following opinion about certain street sculptures purchased by the city of Hanover

[] denn allein was die Sockel gekostet haben, es ist sagenhaft [] Man kann mit dem Geld auch ein bisschen mehr machen, was mehr Leute anspricht, denn diese Skulpturen sprechen doch nur wenige Leute an (Cf. Heine and Wesemüller 1978: 162, 165)

[] what the pedestal alone cost is fantastic [] One could really do more with this money that would reach more people, because these sculptures mean something only to a few people []

A twenty-four year old locksmith and plumber criticizes:

Ich würde sagen, da hat die Stadt viel Geld rausgeschmissen, da haben sie ein paar Figuren hingestellt wo sich 'n Arbeiter kaum etwas drunter vorstellen kann. Das sind alles Personen ohne Kopf, wohl die gleichen Leute die diese Dinger gekauft haben (Heine and Wesemüller 1978: 162)

[I would say the city has thrown away a lot of money, they have stuck a couple of statues there which no working man can make any sense out of. These are all people without heads, probably just like those people who bought these things.]

From another point of view the attempt to make art comprehensible is regarded as doomed from the start.

Nein, das liegt an den Volksschichten, die sind zu dumm dafür! Gehen Sie doch mal von hier bis zum Bahnhof und suchen Sie jemanden, der drei Takte von Schubert oder drei Takte von Stockhausen begreift (M. Bense cf. Richter-Reichenbach 1977: 126)

[No, the fault lies with the class of people, they are too stupid for it! Take a walk from here to the railway station and look for someone who understands three notes of Schubert or three notes of Stockhausen.]

Sagen wir mal 90% können vielleicht nichts damit anfangen mit Kunst. Die können mit Beethoven auch nichts anfangen, die können überhaupt mit keiner Kunst etwas anfangen, auch mit der Kunst, von der sie glauben, dass sie sie kennen und die sie mit fünf Mark auf der Schallplatte kaufen können [] Und es hat auch keinen Sinn, finde ich, wenn man – wie das mit Vorstellungen "Kunst fürs Volk" versucht wurde – jetzt diese Kunstformen mit Brachialgewalt gewissermaßen, den 90% einzuhammern, was man ja in einer Diktatur machen konnte. [] Aber sie würden dann noch lange kein Verständnis dafür entwickeln, weil sie das nicht brauchen, nicht so notwendig brauchen wie andere Dinge (F. Kriwet, cf. Richter-Reichenbach 1977: 184–185)

[Let's say that 90% probably can't even begin to deal with art. They can't deal with Beethoven, they can't deal at all with any art, even with that art which they believe that they know and that they can buy for five marks on a record [] And it also makes no sense, I think, for anyone now to try with brute force to hammer into these 90% these forms of art – that's what has been tried with the performances of "Art for the People", that's what you can do in a dictatorship [] But they still won't develop any understanding for it because they don't need it, or they don't need it as much as they need other things.]

it is also often argued that art was never comprehensible to its contemporaries:

Einen Zahn mochte ich Ihnen eigentlich ziehen von vornherein und das ist, dass die Kunst in den letzten Jahrtausenden immer verständlich war. Für die Zeitgenossen stimmt das nicht. Also wenn wir uns nur mal hundert Jahre zurückbewegen die Impressionisten [] (This was the answer of an expert in the above mentioned WDR program)

[One thing has to be cleared up from the beginning and that is that art was always comprehensible over thousands of years. This is simply not true for the contemporaries. If we go back, for example, a hundred years to the impressionists []]

Other forms of argument attempt to point out the negative consequences that would result from the realization of the comprehensibility requirement for art.

You can see in the socialist countries where the comprehensibility requirement gets you' (Approximate statement of an author of concrete poetry, 1979)

Sonst wäre Kunst einfach ein Darstellen von irgendwas Realem, wo Du dann sagen unmittelbar was mit anfangen kannst, weil Du siehst da eben 'nen Hasen oder so was. Ich meine das ist nicht mehr der Sinn der Kunst, ne, man darüber ist man wahrscheinlich hinaus jetzt. (Said by the student Richard)

[Otherwise art would simply be a representation of something real, something where you could immediately say what it means to you because you see a rabbit there or some such thing. I mean then it's no longer the purpose of art, it's just going too far.]

In connection with discussions about the comprehensibility and communicativity of art, certain contradictions and specific reactions become clear. As, for example, the student Richard recommends to his colleague that he should lower his expectations for comprehension

Ja kann man sich denn nicht nur einfach daran erfreuen. Oder Du kannst auch einfach spontan sagen das Bild gefällt mir oder es gefällt mir nicht.

[Well, can't you just simply enjoy it. Or you can also say spontaneously "I like this picture" or "I don't like it"]

On the other hand Richard rejects the idea of responding to art without any presuppositions.

[] kannst Du die Kunst nicht so schnell konsumieren, Du kannst nicht so durch ne ne moderne Kunstausstellung durchlaufen und danach gehen, gefällt mirs, gefällt mirs nicht, stell ich mich da zehn Minuten vor und lass das wirken oder nicht

[] you can't just consume art so quickly, you can't just run through a modern art exhibition and then leave saying "I like it" or "I don't like it" - I stand in front of it, for ten minutes and let it work or not]

The contradictions expressed by Richard between social aspirations for participation in art and comprehension difficulties are typically resolved by professional representatives of artistic institutions by denying one of two contradictory elements. A. M. Bease expresses it:

Es muss doch nicht jeder Backer, muss doch nicht seinen Picasso in seinem Schlafzimmer hangen haben, wie sie fruher Raffael hangen hatten! Ist doch nicht nottig! (Cf. Richter-Reichenbach 1977: 129)

[Every baker doesn't have to have his Picasso hanging in his bedroom as he previously would have had his Rafael! It's not necessary!]

In contrast, the artist Josef Beuys assumes that where the author does not want to give any interpretation for his work of art, then the recipient also does not need any help. *Der wird aber damit fertig* (Richter-Reichenbach 1977: 167) ["He manages nevertheless"]

Further contradictions result from the separation of art production from the later process of reception. The artist Heinz Mack stated the basic problem in this way:

Vielleicht ist ein Widerspruch darin dass der Künstler zunächst für sich allein arbeitet – grossstmögliche Egozentrik – und dass er andererseits die Gesellschaft braucht. Oder, auch erwartet, dass die Gesellschaft seine Arbeit nicht nur toleriert, sondern auch irgendwie goutiert, dass die Gesellschaft also auch von dieser Arbeit profitiert, im ideellen Sinne (Richter-Reichenbach 1977: 207)

[Perhaps there is a contradiction in the fact that the artist works first for himself alone – most probably egocentrically – and that, on the other hand, he needs society. Or he also expects that society not only tolerates his work but also somehow appreciates it and that the society also profits from the work in the ideal sense.]

Here, in contrast to the previously mentioned contradiction, the perspective of art production is dealt with. A typical reaction to this is that the artist produces only for himself and not for recipients. Marc Adrian, for example, expresses it like this.

Ich halte den Rezipienten für eine relativ sekundäre Instanz vom Standpunkt des Produzenten aus (Cf. Schmidt 1979: 215)

[I regard the recipient as a relatively secondary factor from the standpoint of producer.]

And a Bielefeld author responds (1981):

Man schreibt immer zunächst für sich. Ob dann der Leser oder der Bürger das aufnimmt oder nicht, das ist seine Sache

[One always writes first for oneself. If, then, the reader or the citizen takes it up or not, that's his business.]

Even more interesting than the various positions with respect to these contradictions are the strategies that are used to support or protect these particular positions. First of all, there is the strategy common in other areas of asserting the authority of one's own position or making the opposing position appear ridiculous: the recipient who claims that participation in art is a possibility makes fun of those works of art which remain incomprehensible to him, the recipient or producer who rejects the social function of art presents his position dogmatically as the only possible one etc. M. Bense, for example, uses this strategy in an extreme form (cf Richter-Reichenbach 1977: 125-134). In addition, however, there are also strategies within the framework of which participants – in many cases without being aware of it – exhibit contradictory behavior. Recipients who reject the demand for general comprehensibility in art can often not admit to themselves, because of their self-confessed position as art experts, that they do not understand particular works of art. In this case they attempt to hide their lack of understanding and may pretend to play the role of enthusiasts. Or, artists, on one hand, claim that they produce art only for themselves and that they bear no responsibility for the effect of their products on recipients, and then, nevertheless, on the other hand, frequently flirt with public success and attribute it, when it occurs to themselves or are disappointed when it does not occur. The above mentioned Bielefeld author (1981) has found a formula that allows the attribution of success to the artist irrespective of the variously postulated types of reception in the following words.

Und trotzdem ist es immer dasselbe Werk, das immer wieder neu aufgenommen wird. d h es ging durch alle Verwandlungen hindurch, bewahrt es sich und bleibt irgendetwas Wesentliches an dem die Menschen sich in irgendeiner Weise auch orientieren, aber wie, das ist dem Autor entzogen

[Art] nevertheless it is always the same work that is over and over again newly perceived that is it goes through all the transformations preserving itself and something somehow essential remains, uh, around which people in some way orient themselves, but the way this happens is independent of the author]

As a response to disappointed expectations for success and understanding artists have developed a strategy of "Verarschung" [hardening themselves] which is well-known to both producers and recipients of art. the uncomprehending recipient must be made a fool of until he finally wakes up and grasps the message of the artist.

If we consider the above mentioned positions and behavior patterns as problems in the comprehension of art, then it is more important to inquire about social functions than to seek justifications for these positions and behavior patterns. In order to deal with this question it is certainly not sufficient to analyze the discussions about the comprehensibility problem

themselves, yet, at the same time, one must be careful not to engage in one-dimensional evaluations of functions. Thus I do not want to speculate too far about function postulates. But on the basis of the material available to me, there remains no doubt that, for example, the position of rejecting a comprehensibility requirement for art is a powerful instrument for setting up social boundaries. This instrument may be used by an artist in order to protect his products from too rapid consumption, but certainly it often serves artists and recipients in establishing their social identity (individuality, geniality, membership in an elite, etc.) On the other hand, if an artist insists that art fulfil a social function and that it be comprehensible, this should not be regarded only from the perspective that in this way he is fighting for equal opportunity or showing concern for the needs of the people, for an artist the function of legitimizing his political or commercial interests can also be at stake and for a recipient possibly the function of unconscious self-stigmatizing or implicit self-exclusion from the group of participants in art may be involved. In addition to the investigation of the function question an explanation must also be found as to why the above mentioned contradictions remain unnoticed or partially hidden. With respect to the answering of this question, I assume that on one hand, many of the functional contexts of the art industry are generally not consciously perceived by participants, and, on the other hand, phenomena such as the implicit formation of elites are not perceived by certain participants because they are not compatible with their ordinary theoretical value judgments. A sufficiently precise answer to this question requires still more thorough research efforts.

3.3

According to my impression so far, patterns of behavior with respect to art are far more socially stereotyped than is generally assumed. In the field of pictorial art this stereotyping begins as soon as the art object is approached and is visible in the participants' body language while they are considering it. My main interest in this research concerns the search for patterns in written and oral communication about art and the analysis of the associated forms of cooperation. Here I will only give a brief survey of some results bearing on this question. In many contexts in which communication about art takes place, part of the goal in the interaction consists of evaluating a particular work of art and, possibly, first describing it. This task is obviously accomplished with the help of a socially standardized communication pattern; this pattern consists of certain obligatory or optional components which must be dealt with in a more or less exactly established sequence. The overall structure of this pattern follows this outline: the first step is a preliminary evaluation, then comes a (brief) description, after that, individual aspects taken from a standard repertory are judged, and finally a composite total evaluation is made. This

structure is, for example, approximated in the following two conversation extracts (here the notation (. .) is used for an incomprehensible phrase).

- S Aber was ich unheimlich duftig fand, da war ein solches Bild (. .) das war diese nackte Frau aber das war so ein ganz grosses, und das sah aus, als wäre ein Foto, ganz verschwommen aber das war auch gemalt (. .) Also das fand ich unheimlich toll wie das gemalt (. .) Das hing da, wo da waren alles so Schreibmaschinen gemalt (. .) Und das fand ich ganz toll

[What I thought was really super was that there was this picture (. .), there was this naked woman but it was really big and it looked like it was a photo very blurry, but it was also painted (. .) So that's what I thought was really fantastic how it was painted (. .) It was hanging there, and everywhere there were typewriters painted (. .) And I thought that was really fantastic.]

- W1 Während Sie ja etwa so gute Sachen wie neulich gegeben haben soll (. .) diesen diesen polnischen Film nach Josef Conrad diesen Wajda, ah *Schattenlinie*, das hats im ZDF gegeben das soll ja glanzend gewesen sein

W2 Mhm

- W1 Von diesem Andrzej Wajda

M Hams nicht gesehen

- W1 Die Jugendentwicklung eines jungen Kapitäns der dann plötzlich die Verantwortung in schwieriger Situation für ein ein Segelschiff der Josef Conrad ist ja der leidenschaftliche ah Seefahrer gewesen Und das ist der konnte schon schreiben das ist ja auch ein Mann der um die Zeit geschrieben hat, als der als der Galsworthy gelebt hat Ja du kannst natürlich sagen Peter, das ist alles irgend so altmodisch aber es ist (. .) und mir macht's halt Spass

- [W1 When there are such good things on as they were supposed to have the other night (. .) this this Polish film based on Josef Conrad, this Wajda uh *The Shadow-Line* that was on the second TV program, it was supposed to have been outstanding

W2 Uh-huh

- W1 By this Andrzej Wajda

M We didn't see it

- W1 The adolescent development of a young captain who then suddenly in a difficult situation is responsible for a sailing ship so Joseph Conrad was a passionate uh sailor And he was he really knew how to write and he was a man who wrote about the time that Galsworthy lived Yeah, Peter, you can, of course, say, that it's all sort of old-fashioned but it is (. .) I really enjoy it.]

In both examples the central part of the outline, the judgment of individual aspects, shows up only in fragmentary form In the first example only the technical quality (painted, looks like a photo) is mentioned and this is an aspect that is often referred to as a basis for judgment In the second example, the aspect of the biography of the author and the aspect of the period in which it was produced are mentioned

Other frequently used judgment processes are, for example, the possibility of finding a meaning, the decision as to whether the artist is a professional or an amateur, or whether he is trained or self-taught and determining the price of the work of art.

Heine and Wesemüller (1978) have already noticed that the choice of which

aspects to judge depends, among other things, on what kind of access the evaluator has to the work of art as well as to what extent he regards himself as an expert. A judgment from the perspective of a blue-collar worker is illustrated in the following utterance made by a 33 year old plumber (P) and by the above quoted locksmith (L) and plumber concerning some street sculptures in the city of Hanover:

- P Denn diese rotierenden Walzen – doch, würde ich sagen – gefällt mir. Gefällt mir, weil man da aus diesem Ding die Technik bekommt. Ich bin ja gelernter Maschinenschlosser und da muss man ähnliche Präzisionsarbeit liefern. Also mir gefällts, es ist also nicht irgendetwas hingestellt.
- L Den Brunnen hier [] der gefällt mir materialmässig – Bronze wahrscheinlich – und die ganze Arbeit, ich bin gelernter Bauschlosser und da gehört auch Kunstschlosserei dazu []. die Arbeit, diese Blätter, das finde ich wunderbar! (Cf. Heine and Wesemüller 1978: 175, 177)
- [P] Because these rotating cylinders – yes, I would say. I like them. I like them because from this thing you get some sense of technology. I am a trained machinist myself and there you also need to do that kind of precision work. So I like it, it's not just thrown together.
- L The fountain here []. I like that in terms of the material – probably bronze – the whole work, I am a trained locksmith and artistic metal work is also involved in that [], the work here – these leaves, I think they're wonderful!

The inclusion of autobiographical aspects, especially interest in foreign travel, in particular the experiences resulting from it, is, for example, clearly expressed in the statement of a 34 year old locksmith

Ja, das ist vergleichbar mit Brüssel, dies Atomium. Man könnte vielleicht in fernen Ländern so'ne Art vielleicht als Schopferwerk, so altmodische Schopfräder, konnte man das vielleicht bezeichnen (Heine and Wesemüller 1978: 176)

[Yes, it's comparable with Brussels, the Atomium. In foreign countries you could probably call something like that a bucket elevator, a kind of old-fashioned water wheel.]

This extensive detailing of particular aspects for judgment and the demonstration of expertise can, on one hand, be explained by the fact that the communication participants frequently try to make maximum use of the communicative wavelength available to them. On the other hand, it seems to me that we have to see here more generally, a connection between communication about art and the aims of self-presentation. I will discuss this point in more detail in the next section.

Evaluations of works of art are not merely expressed but also, possibly, reasons are given, as well as emotional support. In providing a foundation for these evaluations social standards obviously come into play as well. In the above quoted statements we have already seen that the evaluator presents himself as an expert in judging a particular aspect and in this way "strengthens" his judgment. In addition, or instead, other authorities are frequently cited. For

example, the above mentioned Bielefeld author (1981) expressed himself in connection with the discussion about the possibility of an objective evaluation of poetry:

Nun ja, wir haben ja selbst festgestellt, dass ein Kommerell z.B. eine () gute Sachen dazu gesagt hat, hat z.B. gesagt, bei einem Gedicht kommt es auf den Zustand der Sprache an, und das ist was sehr Wichtiges

[Now, we have already established that, say, Kommerell for example () has made a good comment on that, he has, for example, said that with a poem it's a question of the condition of the language, and that's something very important]

Another, frequently used argument is when one claims that a large number of other communication participants share one's own opinion. As an example, the above conversation extract from W1, W2 and M is preceded by a passage in which W1 pronounces a judgment on the *Forsythe Saga*

Als ich in der Prima war, da war das das Modernste von England was man so haben konnte. Ich hab das auf Englisch die ganze *Forsythe-Saga* gelesen, war so begeistert und meine Mutter las das auch und Sybille las das. Das fand man eben grossartig.

[When I was in my final year in school, that was the most modern thing from England that you could have. I read the whole *Forsythe-Saga* in English and I was so enthusiastic, and my mother read it too and Sybille also. One thought it was great.]

In evaluations, emotional support plays a special role. Here there is a range of stereotypical expressions. In face-to-face communication they are to a large extent on the level of body language and intonation, in written communication there are, in contrast, only stylistic means such as word choice and text structure which are available. The stereotypicalness of such means of expression becomes especially clear when they are overused and when the resulting statements become almost caricatures. In this respect the art reviews in the provincial press frequently have an amusing effect, consider as evidence the following text extract (Neue Westfälische)

Die Spannung in der Oetker-Halle am Samstag war gross. Eine 15-jährige Geigerin aus Herford wurde das vertrackte und anspruchsvolle Violinkonzert von Johannes Brahms spielen. An kopfschüttelnden Zweiflern hatte denn auch nicht gefehlt – es sei aber gleich gesagt: Viola Sommer brachte sie zum Schweigen. Hochgewachsen, mit langen dunklen Haaren, grossen braunen, angesichts des ausverkauften Saales etwas erstaunt blickenden Augen im aparten, klaren Gesicht, so betrat sie mit dem Dirigenten Wolfgang Drees das Podium [] Mit bewundernswerter technischer wie nervlicher Sicherheit ging sie den schwierigen Solopart des Brahms-Konzerts an, dem kostbaren Instrument (eine Bergonzi des Jahres 1723) entlockte sie mit vorbildlicher, ja auch ästhetisch schöner Hand- und Körperhaltung einen schlanken und gleichermassen vollen, süssen samtigen Ton, dem es indes auch nicht an zupackender Kraft mangelte. Der Klarheit und Reinheit ihrer persönlichen Ausstrahlung entsprach so ganz ihr Geigenspiel und die Interpretation des Konzerts, diese Einheit von Physis und Geist war es denn auch, die die Spannung der begeistertsten

Zuhörer schliesslich in Ovationen entlud [] Der Orchesterklang blieb dennoch stets klar und hell, die dynamischen Schattierungen bewiesen die grossen Differenzierungsmöglichkeiten des jugendlichen Orchesters (die über 80 Mitglieder stehen im Alter zwischen 13 und 24 Jahren) Wolfgang Drees feuerte es mit Elan und weiten Gesten an, holte den melodischen Fluss in den Instrumentalgruppen plastisch hervor anmerte das Orchester, das sich als einheitlicher Klangkörper bewies zu schmeichelnden Pianissimo- wie auch schmetternden Fortissimo-Klangen Dvorak sanft und zart wie eine elegische Klage und heftig wie ein Wirbelstrom über der Prairie []

[The tension in the Oetker Hall on Saturday night was tremendous. Was a 15 year old violinist from Herford going to play the intricate and demanding violin concerto of Johannes Brahms? There were plenty of head-shaking doubters – but let it be said immediately that Viola Sommer brought them to a hushed silence. The tall girl with long, dark hair and large brown eyes which seemed astonished in facing the fully sold-out auditorium and with a charming clear face, came on to the podium with the conductor Wolfgang Drees [] With admirable technical skill and composure she began the difficult solo part of the Brahms concerto. She elicited from the valuable instrument (a Bergonzi of the year 1723) with exemplary even aesthetically beautiful hand and body movements a fine, at the same time full, sweet velvet tone which also contained great strength. The clarity and purity of her personal radiance fully corresponded to her violin playing and her interpretation of the concerto: this unity of body and spirit was what finally defused the tension of the enthusiastic audience in a standing ovation [] The tone of the orchestra remained always clear and bright, the dynamic shading was proof of the great differentiating ability of the young orchestra (the more than 80 members are between the ages of 13 and 24). Wolfgang Drees inspired them with elan and broad gestures and drew from the instrumental groups a melodic flow he animated the orchestra which played as a single unit from soft pianissimo to blasting fortissimo Dvorak soft and tender as an elegiac lament and sudden as a tornado on the prairie []]

In judging such examples as this, we should bear in mind that, to a large extent, it depends on the emotional state of the communication participant, whether he regards the choice of a particular emotional means of expression as overdone or not. At the same time, the use of such expressions is not, of course, limited to communication about art, rather it is common in the context of all value judgments. We can also not exclude from this category the field of academic discussion which by outsiders is frequently regarded as the prototypical case for the dominance of rationality. Consider the following statement made by an academic about his colleague:

Ich glaube, wir haben in Herrn Falke einen Mann und zukünftigen Kollegen, der auf beispielhafte Weise dieses miteinander verbindet, insofern als er die Wissenschaftstradition kennt, aber doch deutlich in seinen Schriften und in seinem Vortrag und in seiner dynamisch und anarchischen Art zu diskutieren deutlich zu erkennen gibt, dass er in einem anderen Ambiente zu denken, zu handeln und zu schreiben pflegt. Dies ist Wissenschaft mit Leidenschaft betrieben, und ich meine wir sollten den angenehmen Schock, der damit verbunden ist, als eine wesentliche Bereicherung der Denkpalette unseres Instituts ansehen und dankbar sein, dass wir uns nicht einfach mit unseren Denkgewohnheiten, die seit Jahrzehnten eingerastet sind, bei uns regenerieren, sondern dass wir auch andere Denkgewohnheiten und auch anarchische Denkgewohnheiten, also jedenfalls leidenschaftliche Denkformen in diesem Institut akzeptieren.

[I believe we have in Mr Falke a man and a future colleague, who combines these features in an exemplary way, to the extent that he is familiar with the academic tradition and yet at the same

time clearly makes it known in his writing and in his lecture and in his dynamic and anarchic way of discussing things, that he is used to thinking in, dealing with, and writing in a different milieu. This is scholarship with passion, and I think, we should regard the pleasant shock that is connected with it as an essential enrichment of the thoughtpalette of our institute and we should be thankful not simply that we continue to reproduce our habitual patterns of thought which have been established over decades, but rather that we also accept different patterns of thought and anarchic patterns of thought, that is, anyway, passionate thinking patterns in this institute.]

Especially noticeable – but equally not typical only for the field of communication about art – are, finally, certain types of cooperation between communication participants in the case of corresponding or differing evaluations. When differing evaluations occur one can observe the introduction of and tolerance for techniques by means of which a subsequent argumentation concerning the differing evaluation position is blocked. One of these techniques consists of the suggestion that, concerning the points of difference, various subjective opinions are possible. Conversely, when parallel evaluations occur one can observe an extraordinary amount of cooperativeness. This can be seen from evaluative completions by the other participant as well as from repeated mutual ratifications concerning the congruity of judgments. And it even may be the case that a successive emotional loading up of the evaluation occurs accompanied by euphoria over shared feelings (cf. Kallmeyer 1979 and his statements on the interaction modality “exaltation”). This cooperation technique will perhaps become clear in the following conversation between an art dealer (D) and a customer (C) where they are concerned with the evaluation of a picture by an amateur painter and for the fourth time in this conversation increasingly close agreement on the value of the picture is in the foreground.

- D Mhm am stärksten ist es eigentlich hier, da haben Sie schon recht hier ne, so dies ist vielleicht dann nicht so, aber ich meine
- C [Also Sie sagen mit dem Himmel
- D [Ja Es ist vielleicht sogar, ich meine, es ist
- C [Mhm
- D [auch so die ganze Komposition ne, die, aber das ist schon sehr schön gemacht, also
- C [Nicht eh
- C ausgesprochene Stärke der Wald da

- [D Mhm it's actually most intensive here, you are right there, here not, so this is perhaps not so, but I think
- C [O K, you say with the sky
- D [Yes It is perhaps then, I mean, it is also
- C [Mhm
- D [the whole composition, isn't it, which, but it's certainly very beautifully done
- C [Isn't it huh
fantastically strong this wood here]

Here the bracket [indicates overlapped speaking

4. Self definition and self presentation

At the literary symposium "Styrian Autumn" in the city of Graz last year (1981) an excited discussion took place on the topic of "The Writer as Outsider". In this connection Greiner made several remarkable points by which he tried to claim that the writer's sense of being an outsider is to a large extent merely a legend produced in common between the author and society (cf. Greiner 1981):

The writer is an outsider, but most of all, it seems to me, he wants to be one. He seeks out the stigma of being on the outside in the hope of partaking of the aura of the Chosen []. The reality of being a literary outsider has become sanctified and fortified by legend. A strange reversal is a consequence of this. In many cases the author is not regarded as an outsider on the strength of being a writer, but rather he makes himself into an outsider in order to be regarded as a writer. And that is why, when the literary public grants him well-meaning acceptance and praises him with distinction, then his role appears to be endangered. Whoever publicly embraces the writer deprives him of being an outsider. The writer resists in so far that he is provoking and he hopes that this provocation will work – and that the public will push him back into being an outsider. The public, however, is, as we know, prepared for this provocation and so it loses its effect. Since they also regard the writer as an outsider, they don't expect anything else.

Greiner draws attention to the fact that, in spite of the many unquestioned disadvantages due to bad economic circumstances and partial disregard by society etc., the role of the writer has so many advantages that one cannot really speak of his being a genuine outsider. The writer receives much more tolerance from society than normal citizens, he possesses a constitutionally guaranteed freedom for his work and he enjoys, like other social groups, the privilege that his work is subsidized with public money. Their work is not under the usual pressure of having to demonstrate social usefulness and they have chosen this job for themselves. Normally they lead less alienated lives and are more free from material concerns than ordinary employees and finally they enjoy enormous social prestige. Greiner describes this prestige as follows:

The public who is educated or interested in education still regard it as an honor to sit face-to-face with a writer in the flesh at a poetry reading. You can see over and over again that mature housewives who have a life of hard but not very much appreciated work behind them hold their books to be signed with expectant hands. The fact that someone has written a novel or a volume of poetry raises him above the speechless mass of the non-literary and lends him a special kind of aura. Public presentations of prizes frequently become solemn occasions, where the prize givers borrow some of this aura. Why do presidents and ministers attend these occasions if not for the reason that they attribute to writers and their works a very specific prestige value? And when writers protest against the neutron bomb then this protest remains ultimately impotent but it has, at least, greater public significance than a similar declaration from German pharmacists would have, although the latter are scarcely less competent to judge the matter.

If Greiner's theses are correct and, in particular, the value of literature for social prestige is correctly described, then, in general, we can expect that

communication about art would frequently be used to claim and establish entitlement to this social prestige. Precisely this function of communication about art has been evident to an astonishing extent in my analysis so far of the material I have gathered. I would like to illustrate this with several passages from a conversation.

The basis for a more precise analysis of these passages is provided by the conversation analysis procedures developed so far. On the other hand, certain insights into self-presentation techniques which I have gathered from other contexts are also relevant to this conversation. In what follows, however, I cannot explicitly introduce these analytic instruments and therefore limit myself to sketching the results of the analysis.

The female student (SW) and the male student (SM) visit the artist (M) in his newly established private gallery in which he displays mainly his own pictures.

- M Und hier hat meine Frau funfundzwanzig Jahre lang ein privates Ferienkinderheim
betrieben Das hat, das ham
- SW Ach
- M wir zum ersten Mal dies Jahr nicht mehr gemacht
- SW Mhm
- SM Is ja doll, das wusst ich auch noch nich
- M Und eh so nam wir auch schon im voraus immer inner Planung die ganzen Raumllichkeiten
so konzipiert, dass man hier also eine Galerie eh unterhalten kann nich, und eh Sie kann
- SM ja
- M ja jetzt mal sehn, eh wie weit
- M das gelungen ist, nich nich, unsere so ne Galerie gibt es in der ganzen Stadt nicht wie diese
hier, nich,
- SW Mhm
- SM Eh
- M mit den Raumllichkeiten, die sind ja sehr grosszugig, nich, und man hat Platz ja
- [M And here my wife directed a private children's summer camp for twenty-five years
- SW Ach
- M This year is the first time she has – we haven't done it any more
- SW Mhm
- SM That's great, I didn't know that before either
- M And so already from the beginning when we were planning it, we conceived the whole
space in such a way that we could also put a gallery here, right, and uh you can see
- SM yes
- M now, uh how well it's worked out, right, right our, a gallery like this one can't be found
anywhere in the whole city, right, and with the space
- SW Mhm
- SM Uh
- M it's certainly very generous, right, and we have enough place here]

The self-presentation technique used by M in this passage is easy to see through M presents himself first of all indirectly as a person who has developed his artistic ambitions with a consistent goal over a long period of

time. The dream of probably every artist – of opening his own gallery – had already been planned by him and his wife twenty-five years ago and he can now realize it. With the possession of his own gallery M has reached the level of the publicly acknowledged and socially stabilized type of the artist. But it is not just any gallery he has opened, but, from the point of view of space, it is the most generous gallery in the city. M does not even give SW and SM the chance to answer his question about whether the preconception of the space has actually been worked out in practice, rather he immediately brings his own positive evaluation into the conversation. The self-presentation technique applied here consists of the fact that the positive evaluation of the gallery is attributed to a corresponding positive evaluation of the character of M, he is an artist who on account of his gallery can be admired and envied and whose social prestige in the city is of high estimation. The process of indirect positive self-evaluation through explicitly formulated self-evaluations of possessions is already on the borderline of being judged as a socially negative self-presentation technique.

Thus, SW's and SM's acceptance of M's evaluation does not appear very spontaneous or enthusiastic. However, one should not draw the false conclusions from the lack of such self-evaluation processes in other conversations that in such cases no self-presentation techniques have been used, the techniques which have been used are frequently only more refined and thus less noticeable than those used by M.

In what follows SM asks the question whether M has ever exhibited the works of other artists in his gallery. M explains that he does not do this for legal reasons and at the most he could have one guest exhibitor.

- M Ich hatte nun allerdings schon einen Bildhauer, den ich gut kenne und den ich auch sehr schätze, mich, dem hab ich gesagt, dass er gerne hier mal n paar eh
 SW Mhm
 M Plastiken reinstellen soll. Der arbeitet vor allem in Stein
 M () kanns auch
 SW Das lässt sich gut kombinieren. Plastiken
 SM ()
 SW und dann
 SM Ja
 M Ja, der war auch auf der documenta
 SM Ja () daher kenn ich ()
 SW Mhm
 M Und ich und ich hab ihm gesagt, also das, was an Plastik auf der documenta war, ich hielt das mit das beste am besten, was er gemacht hat da diesen Felsengarten

- [M I did have a sculptor once who I know very well and who I very much admire, you see, and I said to him that I'd be pleased to have here a couple uh of sculptures displayed. He works
 SW Mhm
 M mainly in stone () And is good at it, too
 SW That goes together very well. Sculptures
 SM ()

- SW [and then
 SM [yes
 M [yes, he was also at the documenta
 SM [Yes () I know him from there ()
 SW [Mhm
 M [And I and I said to him then that the sculptures
 which were at the documenta, I regarded as the best of the best what he did there with this
 rock garden]

M also uses this passage for indirect self-presentation. First he takes it upon himself only as a duty to answer the opening question of SM concerning the exhibition of work by other artists. And even the mentioning of his acquaintance with the sculptor and his formulation of his evaluation for him serves mainly to explain why M offered to exhibit the sculptor in the first place. By means of the following comment that the sculptor has also exhibited at the documenta (which especially in Germany is very well-known) M's offer and his positive relationship to the sculptor achieve a retrospective new importance: through the participation in the documenta and the thus expressed fame of the sculptor, M himself experiences an increase in value as a person and as a sculptor. M supports this increased evaluation by saying that he elevated his acquaintance above the mass of documenta artists, thus demonstrating at the same time through his praise his own competence as a judge of art. The self-presentation technique used here by M is more difficult to see through in the real communication act. In order to prevent misunderstanding I must mention here that in using the expression 'self-presentation technique' I am not presupposing a conscious strategy in behavior; rather we must assume that self-presentation techniques learned in the course of socialization are, like much other routine behavior, quasi-automatically used in communication and that they are partially removed from conscious control.

A special refinement in the reference of M to the documenta consists of the fact that, on one hand, it serves the positive evaluation of the sculptor and indirectly of M, and that on the other hand he uses the documenta as a negative example in order to define his own artistic position. (We will return later to another figure showing a similar contradictoriness even more clearly.)

- SM [() Zeichnungen warn auch ganz gut auf der documenta fand ich, aber sonst naja ()
 M [Ja mhm
 SM [das is nich unsere Richtung
 M [Ja fur mich fur mich, das sieht man sofort
 M [is ja documenta nichts
 SM [das sind keine Anregungen
 SM [mehr in meinen Augen mhm
 M [deswegen geh ich auch gar nicht hier 'n, ree nee
 M [Also ich betreibe ja eh eh engelehnt an die eh konservative Malerei eh also Realismus
 SM [und ich meine ja
 SM [() Studium

- M [Ich male eben so aus der Natur heraus, neeh, und ich
 SW [Ja
 SM [Ja
 M [bin Jäger und Fischer, eh ganz stark entwickelte Hobbies,
 SM [Hm
 M [also sitz ich oft stundenlang in der Landschaft und bin natürlich mit ihr bis aufs Kleinste
 vertraut und deswegen
 SM [Ja
 M [wars wars für mich ganz eh paradox, wenn wenn ich jetzt auf einmal eh mich von der Natur
 in der Malerei entfernen würde, nich, das kann ich gar nich
 SM [Mhm
- [SM () I thought the drawings at the documenta were also quite good
 but otherwise (), there is nothing
 M [yes mhm
 SM [to our taste
 M [from my point of view from my point of view, you can see straight off the
 documenta is nothing
 SM [it's nothing to get
 excited about any more in my eyes mhm
 M [that's why I don't go there, no, no You see.
 SM [I work uh uh leaning more towards conservative painting in other words realism and I think
 ()
 studies
 M [yes
 M [I paint direct from nature, right and I am a hunter and a
 SB [yes
 SM [yes
 M [fisherman, uh quite seriously developed hobbies
 SM [hm
 M [so I sometimes sit for hours in the countryside and I am naturally familiar with it down to
 the smallest detail and that's why
 SM [yes
 M [it would be a paradox for me, if if I now suddenly was removed from nature in my painting
 it would no, I couldn't do it at all
 SM [mhm]

M is a landscape painter of the rather traditional type which has received a mixed response. Thus for M there is probably fairly intense pressure to justify himself with respect to his style of painting. For the purpose of stabilizing one's own socially threatened position and for protecting oneself from the attack of others there are certain socially stereotyped procedures. For example, one can try to devalue other positions; M chooses this procedure by cutting himself off from the artistic styles that one associates with the documenta. In addition there is the technique of defining his position by means of a flattering characterization; M uses this technique when he describes his style of painting with the categories "conservative painting" and "realism"; at least with the latter category the questionable features of his painting style are neutralized or

'defined away' Finally, M relies on the procedure of construing his position as a matter of necessity: the root of his painting is in his two hobbies hunting and fishing and so for him painting is not separable from nature. The necessity of a position always presupposes the competence to fill this position, M provides proof of this competence by defining himself as being maximally familiar with the countryside.

SM grasps M's definition of his position and describes the relationship to nature as something in common between them (including SW) This is also supported by M, but he immediately separates himself from the painting style of SW who studies at an art academy and in whom he still thinks he sees *noch sehr starke Impulse aus Ihrem eigenen Unterricht* ['a strong influence from her teachers'].

As support for his evaluation, which SW admits, M adds the following

- M [Namlich ich ich sehe ich erkenne jede Spur von von von diesen Padagogen
 SW] Ja
 M die als Professoren auf den Padagogischen Hochschulen sitzen, nich nich, und dann ihre ihr ihre Spur auf die Schuler ubertragen, nich
- [M [Namely, I I see, I recognize every trace of of these paedagogues, who are acting as
 SM] yes
 M professors in the Teachers' Training College, no, no, and then they transmit their characteristics to their pupils, right]

This passage has two functions in M's self-definition. First it becomes clear from the judgmental way that M speaks about the art professors (one might add, "these so-called paedagogues who transmit their painting-style like an infectious disease to their pupil"), that M has serious reservations about the academic practice of art. These reservations result again from the procedure of undervaluing other positions in order to secure one's own: M is self-taught and therefore has to protect himself against the possible criticism that he has not mastered painting technique because he lacks formal training. The prerequisites for defining himself as a competent painter are improved, if M challenges the dependence of competence on academic training. Secondly, a central socially stereotyped defining characteristic of an artistic personality is its genuineness or uniqueness.. When M denies this characteristic to the student SW, he indirectly claims it for himself; this is again a typical procedure in self-definition or self-presentation, particularly when it is used in the framework of disassociating oneself from something.

The characteristic of uniqueness is also explicitly taken up as the conversation continues. SM asks M to what extent he is influenced by other artists and in response M disclaims any direct influence from teachers

- M Ich hab das Glück gehabt, dass ich immer ne Lehrer gehabt habe, aber auch Professoren, eh die also ein Lehramt hatten, ja und die ham, eh ich war
 SW] Ja
 SM] Ja

M befreundet mit ihnen, und die ham sich immer so fur das interessiert, was ich machte und weil die wussten, ich war son richtiges Wildgemuse, nich, also das unbeeinflussbar blieb nich, und eh die ham mir, auch Mohn sagte,

SM [Mhm

M [ein Gluck, dass Sie nicht zur Akademie gegangen sind, nich, sagte er
SM [Mhm

[M I had the good luck that I always had teachers, but also professors uh they also has teaching positions, and they had,

SM [yes

SM [yes

M and I was friends with them and they were always interested in what I was doing, because they knew I was a kind of real wild flower, in other words that I remained uninfluenced and

SM [mhm

M [they said to me, also Mohn said, that it was lucky, I never went to an academy, that's what he
SM [mhm

M said]

This passage is the culmination of the direct self-presentation of M. His uniqueness as an artist is presented in the image of the wild flower that reaches its full beauty in free nature without the efforts of a gardener. M defines himself as a natural talent who would only have been spoiled by an academic training. M secures this self-definition (by a standard procedure) by citing authorities. on one hand he refers to a group of unspecified size (and thus indirectly implies a large group) of professors friendly to him, on the other hand he cites the artist Mohn who enjoys a great reputation in the circle of artistic acquaintances that M, SW and SM have in common. Here we immediately notice again the phenomenon of contradictory evaluation of social authorities: in the previous passage M completely devalued the group of art professors in their role as pedagogues, now he decorates himself with a positive self-evaluation which he claims they have given (if professors were friendly with him and were interested in his paintings, then they could not have regarded his pictures as being bad).

The analysis of self-definition of an artist and his self-presentation techniques presented here as an example would have to be carried out in a similar fashion for all the roles involved in participation in art. I cannot carry out this task here, but the reader should be able to extrapolate the manner in which the same or similar techniques would be applied in the case of other roles. Special research interest should be devoted to the recipient of art. In my opinion, there are numerous stereotypical self-definitions which can be interpreted from the manner in which one participates in art or communicates about art (for example, the deep thinker, the initiate, the expert, the open-minded one, the enthusiast etc.). However, it must not be forgotten that participation in art and communication about art do not serve only the purpose of self-definition and its accompanying interactions; rather it is much more concerned with shaping

a reality that is suited to this self-definition. Looking more closely, this comment suggests a new connection with the discussion of fictionality in this volume: participation in art and communication about art make possible the creation of a reality which may not correspond exactly to other areas of social reality. We are speaking now, not about fictionality which is related exclusively to that presented in a work of art, but rather more generally about the phenomenon of producing a reality which takes place in many social contexts (for example in conflicts) and which is not limited to the field of art.

The elaboration of the fictionality concept as presented here in connection with the productive activities of participants in art opens the way, it seems to me, for a critical analysis of certain unpleasant by-products of the art industry. I will mention a few, examples which are in no way new:

- the teacher who projects his own latent delusions of genius on to a pupil and pushes him into an unfortunate artistic career,
- the unsuccessful author who styles himself as an unrecognized genius (cf. the controversy between Narwal 1981 and Wagenbach 1981),
- the moderator of a cultural program who exploits his guests as 'sparring partners' for his own self-presentation

On the basis of the results of a closer analysis of such extreme examples, I would hope that in the long run it would be possible to achieve a greater social consciousness for much of the now still latent mechanisms of participation in art or those which have been immunized by mystification and in this way come to a more realistic evaluation of the potentials and functions of art

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