Peter Bürger’s critique of the historical avant-garde accounts for its ineffectual nature as a movement because ‘[a]rt as an institution prevents the contents of works that press for radical change in society […] from having any practical effect.’ Bürger argues for hermeneutics to be employed as a critique of ideology, as a facet of the understanding of the ‘historicity of aesthetic categories’. The influence of institutions on music 1968 has served as a central part of its critique: the work concept itself seems to enshrine political ineffectiveness and the bourgeois nature of art practice that ought to be critiqued by an avant-garde. Adorno’s claim that ‘today the only works which really count are no longer works at all’ also no longer seems to apply when the relationship of work such as that produced by the so-called Neue-Kozeptualismus with established musical institutions is considered.

In contrast, Bourriaud’s concept of the ‘exform’ re-conceives the avant-garde as outside of institutions and an idea of ‘progress’ that is aligned with a dominant capitalist ideology. The exform is ‘the site where border negotiations unfold between what is rejected and what is admitted, products and waste’, and forms ‘an authentically organic link between the aesthetic and the political’. Progress, as part of a capitalist narrative, both creates and abhors waste. Therefore the task of the avant-garde artist is to give energy to this waste, outside of political and ideological institutions. This type of avant-garde practice functions to ‘bring precarity to mind: to keep the notion alive that intervention in the world is possible.’ This paper explores the exform with respect to the music and art work of the

2 ibid., p.6.
3 ibid., pp15-16.
7 ibid., p.10.
8 ibid., p.47.
British composer Chris Newman, and considers how Bourriaud’s approach to re-thinking the avant-garde might apply specifically to contemporary and experimental music in the present.

Short Biography

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