

# A Work in Progress or, Necessity Is the Mother of Invention: The Making of *A Procession in Honor of Aesthetic Progress: Objects to Theoretically Wear, Carry, Pull or Wave*

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Although Paul never said as much, I am convinced that by the time we reunited at *documenta 4* in Kassel, a few months before we were to open his exhibition,<sup>1</sup> most of the objects he decided to show at our gallery were at least partially finished, for immediately after he returned to his studio in Rome, he sent us the photograph for the invitation, which showed him wearing one of the four *Headboxes* and on the table in front of him, a small stuffed bird with no wings of the sort he had used in one of his *Chairs*. Believe it or not, Paul had decided to arrange the transportation of his objects from Rome to Essen on his own. With only a few days left before the exhibition opening, Paul called to tell us that he would arrive in Stuttgart by train the next morning (“Is that nearby?”), and that he was carrying the objects for the exhibition in his luggage (!!). Of course we suspected that something would go wrong, but we had no idea that it would turn out to be such a *catastrophe*.

First, the truck that we had dispatched to pick up Paul and his objects arrived back in Essen carrying Paul, but only Paul: The train’s luggage car had apparently been disconnected in Stuttgart and brought to a customs storehouse. Karl-Ernst Jöllenbeck, my partner at the gallery, headed to Stuttgart with an assistant in a Ford Transit, with the goal of releasing Paul’s work from customs and transporting it back. Except that the customs office was closed, which was a problem, since the exhibition was slated to open in two days. Jöllenbeck and I were especially pressed for time because the gallery was participating in the Düs-

seldorf contemporary art fair *Prospect '68*, which opened the next day, and we needed to make final preparations. A friend of Jöllenbeck’s in Stuttgart came to the rescue, helping us to clear the objects out of customs after-hours because they were classified as “perishable goods, fresh meat.” Thank goodness the customs officers didn’t realize that all the “fresh meat” was made of wax. It was in the customs storehouse that Karl-Ernst finally, for the first time, laid eyes on our exhibition, for now a tower of cardboard boxes. As he lifted the first box into the van, he heard a rattling so ominous that he didn’t dare to open it or any of the other boxes. They loaded everything and drove back to Essen, arriving there in the middle of the night.

What we encountered the next morning as we began to unpack the objects was simply catastrophic. Paul disappeared back to bed, murmuring a curt, “That’s easy.” Karl-Ernst and I returned to Düsseldorf to finish setting up our booth at the fair. We took one of Paul’s undamaged *Chairs* with us, so that we could at least show it that evening at the opening (fig. 99). Later that morning we went back to Essen, and I woke up Paul and managed to persuade him to go over his objects and assess the damage.

He had brought contact sheets from a color film that showed what the individual objects had looked like in his studio before leaving Rome (fig. 85); unfortunately, he had lost the original negatives. But it was clear that the exhibition as he had envisioned it consisted of two sculptural sequences titled *Chairs* and *Headboxes* that were brought