In 1973, André Cadere walked into an exhibition where the work of Daniel Buren—an artist he had recently started antagonizing—was on view. Cadere was carrying an example of his own artwork: an unwieldy, nearly seven-foot-long bar constructed from four-inch-diameter spools of wood that he had painted in conspicuous yellow, red, and black. The exhibition showcased recent abstract European and North American painting and took place in an otherwise vacant, luxurious apartment in Paris. Observing a resemblance between the paintings on display and the object he had brought along, Cadere decided to leave his imposing bar in the entryway so that it could be appreciated alongside the other artworks. A few days went by, and he returned only to find that his bar had been hidden away in a closet. To make sure that its presence at the exhibition did not go unnoticed, he mailed out an exhibition announcement. On it, he titled his work *Unlimited Painting* and instructed visitors to seek out the sequestered bar in the “broom closet” at “16, Place Vendôme, first floor on the left.” Noting the apartment’s other not-to-be-missed attractions, the mailing additionally listed the apartment’s mirrors, marble chimneys, faux marble painting, crystal chandeliers, “etc.,” and “a painting exhibition reuniting certain painters who would put painting in question”—the full title of the exhibition the artist had originally come to see. The exhibition organizers—Buren’s brother,
Michel Claura, and philosophy professor René Denizot—apparently did not agree with Cadere’s guerrilla tactics, and by the end of the exhibition, Une exposition de peinture réunissant certains peintres qui mettraient la peinture en question (A Painting Exhibition Reuniting Certain Painters Who Would Put Painting in Question), the bar had mysteriously disappeared altogether.¹

As Cadere claims to have understood the curators’ intentions, his bar was perfectly suited to participate in the exhibition. In Histoire d’un travail, a catalogue raisonné that he assembled just before his death, Cadere reflected on the appropriateness of Unlimited Painting: “In the manner in which this piece consisted in an assemblage of segments of painted wood, it assumed a relationship to painting. Additionally, the painted surface being cylindrical, it is without end, with neither recto nor verso. In that way, my work has the status of covering the domain of painting, all while putting it in question.”²

Based on the self-descriptive title of the exhibition, Cadere’s work, as he presented it here, would have engaged productively with the other artists’ works that were on display. Photographs documenting the exhibition’s installation show Giorgio Griffa’s wide swaths of creased cloth stained with pigment loosely hung from nails in the wall; Robert Mangold’s identically
proportioned, smooth, heavy monochrome easel paintings conjoined along their vertical sides; Robert Ryman’s studies comparing various shades of white square figures and grounds; Alan Charleton’s painting groups in which one canvas framed another that hovers within its borders; Niele Toroni’s canvases, marked by the perfect indexical imprint of the brush with which they were serially dabbed before being dropped from the ceiling and rolled several feet across the floor; and Buren’s prefabricated awning-material pieces, one that partially stretched across a window like a valence and a second that covered an entire wall, including the painting that hung upon it, its gilded frame barely peeking from behind the edge of the striped canvas. These avant-garde experiments put painting in question by investigating the boundaries between the visible and its physical support. Pigment separated from medium, paint achieved object status, the industrial rubbed up against the handmade, and canvas was liberated from stretcher and pointed to the support of the space around it. Focusing on the materiality of his artworks was similarly of central importance to Cadere, who called attention to their physicality in referring to them as “round bars of wood,” yet unlike some of the invited artists, he insisted his formalism could not be constrained by the ideological programs of the institutions that at least some of them claimed to resist.

The gambit that Cadere staged in leaving his bar behind put pressure on the relationship between art that, in 1973, continued to produce itself as autonomous, and art invested in social and institutional critiques. Formally, all of the painting presented at A Painting Exhibition drew from the abstract investigations made possible by the establishment of artistic autonomy in a market that promotes individual authorship. Several of the artists on show, however, practiced a strain of minimalist painting that rejected the idea of the artist as the author of a worldview that he or she could bestow on a public by producing great artworks. Among these was Buren, who had been very visibly establishing his own brand of site-specific institutional critique since the mid-1960s and whose essay “Limites critiques” (“Critical Limits”), discussed in chapter 2, Cadere was apparently referencing with his own Unlimited Painting. In Buren’s text, he outlined the cultural and institutional frameworks that delimit an artwork’s possible range of meanings, and although the text can be used as an interpretive key to understanding his own work’s use of surfaces and supports, it did not claim a position that would allow artists to emancipate their work from those limits. Cadere’s purpose was seemingly to place himself within the orbit of the more prominent artist so as to call attention to his own work, which was formally and strategically very similar, but with the crucial difference, so Cadere argued, that he was more institutionally independent,
Figure 3.2. Installation of *A Painting Exhibition*... , 1973. Photograph by Eustachy Kossakowski. © Anka Ptaszkowska. The negative is owned by Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland.
ANDRÉ CADERE’S CALLIGRAMS OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

“unlimited.” His interjection at the exhibition highlighted what he saw as Buren’s overreliance on stable institutional locations, and did so through a two-fold process that tested the bounds of acceptable display at the exhibition and put in question the critical effectiveness of the work’s decorative aspect by equating the officially exhibited paintings with the apartment’s other paraphernalia. In doing so, he called attention to a situation in which neo-avant-garde painting could be seen as a collection of formalist exercises consistent with the consumable bourgeois narrative of autonomous artistic progress.

Formal commonalities between Cadere and Buren push back against autonomy by highlighting the centrality of performance and display as fundamental to encasing objects that refused to communicate directly in layers of meaning that are not primarily visible. Like Buren, Cadere produced a single type of iconic work based on systematically repeated formulas that he intended to eliminate his own subjective import and neutralize the significance of viewer interpretation. In 1970, he began making “round bars of wood” exclusively, and by his premature death from cancer in 1978, he had produced approximately two hundred of them. The similarity among the bars meant that their display, which changed according to institutional and physical context, became their primary and most significant variable. Their handiness gave them a portability that allowed the artist to show them while traversing the private/public boundaries of galleries. While Buren’s work from this period similarly played across the boundaries of institutional limitation, the highly visible and intentional attachment to the body of the mobile artist was the feature by which Cadere argued their opposition to Buren. Whereas in situ works generally complemented the sites in which they were placed, Cadere reversed the hierarchy of influence such that the bars created a constellation of display locations—both upscale galleries and downtown street corners—that would be defined by their shared relation to his round bars of wood. Rather than creating harmony between work and site, Cadere’s juxtapositions, more often than not, based their critique on the cultural inappropriateness of the art object’s presence within and outside artistic contexts.

His intervention at A Painting Exhibition demonstrated that this inappropriateness is always arbitrarily determined by subjective decisions, in this case, those of the curators, even as their framing of the show suggested that their process was based on a transparent and rational set of criteria. The lengthy, descriptive title that Claure and Denizot chose for A Painting Exhibition bore a family resemblance to the instructive aesthetic of titles like Il ne s’agissait évidemment que de regarder des toiles de Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni, discussed in chapter 2, as it announced a common mode of thinking about art and its...
relationship to display. The title reproduced the formal logic that Claura identified in the paintings as they sought out what he referred to as a “neutrality” that did not tell the viewer what to think. In this way, the work on view echoed Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni’s manifestos from 1966 that encouraged greater intellectual engagement on the part of the viewer by presenting them with less to see. The title announced both what the exhibition did, “reuniting certain painters who would put painting in question,” and its self-awareness as a particular form of event, “an exhibition.” Such a conspicuous statement of the obvious positioned the organizers as thinking in the same vein and sharing the goals of the painters. If the painters were making painting about painting, then the exhibition organizers were making an exhibition, but the way in which that exhibition was then about exhibition was limited to formal exercises, rather than investigating the cultural limitation that Buren had written about in his 1971 essay “Critical Limits.” The exhibition masked any politics present in the painters’ works with a pastiche of the conceptual penchant for tautology. While a number of the artists shown in the exhibition have historically been grouped under the category of conceptualism, it would seem that for Claura, conceptual art was nothing more than a style whose content was as enriching as its visual presentation. As he stated in a dialogue with Seth Siegelaub from the same year (yet while speaking as though conceptual art’s moment had passed), conceptual art “had the seductive appeal of intellectual pretense. It was, in fact, a mixture of trivial gags and big ideas: in place of having a painting, no more than a title is provided, but, at the same time, ‘it poses a problem.’ This provided for the instantaneous assimilation of the magic of the word: if it is ‘conceptual’ it is interesting. Spiritual and intellectual elevation by conceptual art—there is no doubt that it was this hope that caused a large part of the clientele to follow it.”

Such a statement reduces a movement—which, by 1973, was varied enough to itself be questionable as a movement—to a marketing strategy that European artists adopted because it was an inexpensive and expeditious way to align themselves with the American avant-garde from which it originated. Though six years earlier Claura had worked with and promoted Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, and Toroni’s explicitly oppositional demonstrations against institutional conventions, Cadere’s exhibition suggests that with A Painting Exhibition Claura now evacuated the political intent from the work and reduced its social significance to the marketability he helped to guarantee through the manipulation of the codes he himself established. Exposing the lack of neutrality in Claura and Denizot’s exhibition of the work was, of course, Cadere’s ambition.
More than an acknowledgment of his own work’s affinity with these paintings, Cadere’s observation that he too was putting painting in question affected a false naïveté that oversimplifies his own project. The parodic self-evidence of Cadere’s *Unlimited Painting* announcement clarified his intentions. Playing off of Claura and Denizot’s adopted conceptual aesthetic, Cadere exposed the material reality that was masked by the assumed transparency of the exhibition’s reduction to the zero degree. While Claura and Denizot transformed description into a proper name, Cadere responded by listing the exhibition title among generic mirrors, chimneys, and chandeliers, thereby returning the proper name to the status of a common one. The self-evident disinterestedness of Claura and Denizot’s title ostensibly served to distance the exhibition from any contingent aspects that might creep in to bear on either its motivation or its reception, yet not only did Cadere insist on the divergence between the literal and the metaphorical uses of the title’s wording, but the tools that he used to pry these two registers of signification apart were specifically the luxury objects whose presence among the artworks had previously been merely incidental. Drawing an equivalence between the exhibition’s status as an event composed of paintings and the other objects in the room, he undermined the idea that the paintings were neutral and spot-lit the contingencies of their classed context, which reduced intellectual investigation to a commodity of bourgeois taste culture.

His intervention at *A Painting Exhibition* set up a situation of competing autonomies—those of the artworks, those of the exhibition organizers, and those of the artist—by calling attention to the juxtaposition of what was being displayed and how. The curators placed the abstract painting they had selected within a tradition of modern art progressing toward the achievement of self-definition, for art’s sake alone, and Cadere responded by pointing to the disjuncture between the curator’s ideal and the material reality of the exhibition. While the sanctioned artists’ individual projects were subsumed by decorative affirmation, Cadere resisted this system by valorizing the autonomy of the artist rather than the autonomy of the artwork. This analytic nexus around the gallery space, the authority of institutions, and the notion of artistic autonomy defined his practice more broadly as he traveled through the streets of Western Europe and New York with his work, attended other artists’ openings, and devised clever ways to highlight the power differentials that normally remain invisible in the art world. Through this antagonistic position he fashioned himself as a rogue art celebrity, manipulating the multiple provinces of institutional participation in the name of institutional resistance.
The politics of Cadere’s institutional critique should be understood in terms of his personal history as a migrant who relocated to Western Europe in order to escape the persecution he suffered under the state institutions of communist Romania. Cadere’s father, Victor Cadere, had been a diplomat under the government of King Carol II. When the communists came to power, the Cadere family was stripped of its livelihood, Victor Cadere was convicted of “intensive activity against the working class” and sent to prison, and the family lost its home and source of income. André Cadere’s ambitions to attend university as a philology student were quashed, and he was conscripted into the army’s labor brigades due to his “unhealthy social background.” Under communism, the arts and humanities were considered potentially threatening ideologically to the government, so their study was restricted to members of the proletariat whose work conformed to the Soviet socialist realist model. Cadere’s only access to the art world was through working for official artists as an assistant and life model for artists like Corneliu Baba, often posing in the costumes, and with the accouterments, of industrial workers. In this way, he gained artistic training, while further education in the arts came from the underground salon of Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcas, the son of the founder of the National Museum of Art, which the communists closed in 1948. The salon provided nonaligned intelligentsia a gathering place where, through music recitals and readings of literature, they attempted to keep alive the humanist culture that was otherwise being censored. It was this climate that caused Romanian artists and intellectuals to leave the country after 1965, when the death of the general secretary of the communist party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and the rise of Nicolae Ceausescu led to a relaxation on travel and other restrictions.

Cadere left Romania for Paris in 1967. While the anti-authoritarian practice that he developed resembled the politics of French leftists during May 1968, Magda Radu notes that having just “crossed over the iron curtain,” he would have hesitated to embrace Marxist ideas, a political position that he confirmed in a 1978 interview when he told Sylvère Lotringer, “I’ve been accused of being a Marxist. I completely deny that charge.” An art historian, fellow Romanian émigré, and friend of Cadere, Sandra Agalides notes that one might have expected him to begin making art for art’s sake once he arrived in the West and was no longer constrained by state prohibitions. Indeed, when he first arrived in Paris, Cadere began producing paintings in the vein of the Op and kinetic art that resembled a more subjective variation on the highly systematized work that the Group de Recherche d’Art Visuel (GRAV) was pro-
ducing around the same time. He quickly shifted, however, to developing the portable bars intrinsic to his process of institutional critique. Indeed, the abstract paintings and objects, and the process-oriented display tactics that Cadere invented in Paris, were strikingly different from the mural painting that he had completed as an artist’s assistant in Bucharest, yet as the Romanian authors of André Cadere / Andrei Cădere (2011) argue, the work that he made in Paris was entirely related to the politics of his experiences as a Romanian.

The role of Cadere’s background in his work, however, is ambivalent. He acknowledged that his interest in the margins may have been related to the fact that he came from “a country which is outside the Western cultural system, a totally marginal country,” and it is frequently argued that his display strategies of traversing “frontiers” between public space and private gallery derive directly from his experience as a migrant—that, in performing this mobility, he continuously played the role of the “foreigner.” As Radu argues, however, Cadere worked against his origins as his exilic experience led him to reject any overt association with national identity. He “rejected autobiography,” as she puts it, with the result that his friends in the West knew almost nothing about his life in Romania. Instead, she notes that he preferred to
embrace the cosmopolitan fluidity of a contemporary artist negotiating the
currents of the international exhibition circuit. As he claimed, in an inter-
view with Lynda Morris, it was only in “international situations” that he did
not feel like a “stranger,” and as Radu notes, the incident that brought him
the widest notoriety was one in which he loudly and publicly rejected Docu-
menta V director Harald Szeemann’s attempt to force him to play the role of
Romanian pilgrim and travel to the exhibition on foot, thereby placing him
in the overdetermined lineage of his compatriot Constantin Brancusi, who
famously walked from Romania to France in 1903. For his insubordination,
Szeemann barred Cadere from participating in the exhibition, yet it would
seem from Radu’s interpretation that the exposure he received rewarded him
for his rejection of particularity.

Cadere’s relationship to his personal history is not one of complete rejec-
tion, however. Rather, he preferred to occupy his position as a foreigner stra-
egically. As a case in point, an anecdote from Documenta V reports that after
being disallowed from showing his work, Cadere walked the galleries of the
exhibition with a small tape recorder blaring “The Internationale” because,
in Cadere’s words, he wanted “to annoy them.” This seeming retaliation sub-
stituted Szeemann’s romantic fantasy of the Eastern immigrant with another
myth from the Soviet bloc, as he transformed an artifact of ideological kitsch
celebrated by leftists in the West into an obnoxious imposition. Agalides uses
the term “frontier position” to describe this combined lack of sentimenta-
ity toward his homeland with a lack of interest in capitulating to the models
offered by the West. Aware, on one hand, of “the difference between revolu-
tionary promise and lived reality,” he was equally attentive to the ways that
“democratic freedom in Western Europe was largely a vague approximation of
true freedom.”

Although Cadere’s art might not be described as art for art’s sake according
to the modernist terms that Agalides likely had in mind, the relationship be-
tween art and autonomy was one of his primary concerns. While his pursuit of
aesthetic freedom was legible in the barres de bois rond, which are the primary
focus of Western commentators who tend to read his work in terms of its re-
lationship to minimalist and conceptualist developments, the idea of freedom
is moreover present in the politics of his display tactics, which the Romanian
historians in Radu’s book interpret independently of aesthetic concerns for
the most part. “Contestation was not an attribute of this work, but was the
work itself,” writes Agalides. The freedom that he aggressively sought to as-
sert vis-à-vis the gallery system was a way of correcting for the lack of freedom
that he found in Paris, Kassel, and elsewhere in the West. That this would be
a preoccupation for him comes as self-evident to Radu, who argues that the reason that he built his identity on marginality in the West was not because he was from the East, but because marginality already described his condition of existence in Romania. Cadere was explicit about this during an artist’s talk titled “Presentation of a Work, Utilization of a Work” that he gave at the invitation of Bernard Marcelis, who at the time was a university student in the Philosophy and Letters Department at the Catholic University in Louvain Belgium in 1974. Cadere told the group of students, professors, artists, and gallerists, “It should be pointed out that the author comes from an Eastern country. This represents a determining factor. Can we imagine an American artist bringing his work to an exhibition without being invited? The Western mentality, nourished by pride, by intellectual scorn (and material comfort), makes such an attitude inconceivable; except to those who, coming from marginal countries, have nothing to lose.”

Coding his practice in terms of desperation, Cadere transforms a perceived weakness into strength, re-reads an absence of institutional patronage as a way to access a freedom “truer” than that of rule-bound artists. The form of autonomy that Cadere pursued in the West resembled his experiences of the Romanian salons and other “zones of autonomy” in which, as writer and literary theorist Matei Călinescu described it, “What we were doing was an attempt to construct a parallel universe and an identity . . . completely alien to the reality of those years of Stalinist Russification of the country and our (false) public identity.” Against this stacking of associated binaries true/false, with freedom/ideology, with private/public, Cadere did not align only with one side or the other, but instead chose to pursue a “true freedom” that pointed to, and resisted, such categorization.

Presentation, Conversation

At his talk in Louvain, Cadere described how the formal aspects of the bar and their public display were united aspects of his production. Standing in front of a lecture hall, with one of his bars leaning against the wall, he explained how the bars were assembled from wooden spools that he cut from dowels according to a ratio that fixed the height to diameter at 1:1. He then drilled out the spools, painted them uniformly black, white, or any of the six colors of the rainbow, threaded them onto a dowel, and affixed them with glue. The number of spools, and therefore the length of each bar, was determined by a compositional scheme based on mathematical permutations. Cadere devised a system whereby the colors of the bars were ordered according to predetermined permutations that he sequentially reordered until exhausted. In size,
the bars came in two widths, either just smaller than a wrist or larger than a bicep, and they ranged from the length of a femur to the height of a somewhat tall man. An individual bar might have anywhere between three and seven colors and be twelve to fifty-six times as long as its diameter. The resulting bars were more or less conspicuous, more or less portable, more or less easy to hide in a broom closet—a theme that was humorously illustrated by Cadere’s friend, the artist Jacques Charlier.

Cadere’s system of ordering was central to the way that he understood and valued color as primarily efficient and practical. “The essential function of color,” he said at the talk, “is to differentiate things.” “If you open a transistor, you see wires in the interior, groups of wires. It is evident that they are not colored to render the interior of the transistor pretty, but to show that they have different functions.” Similarly, these sequences negated any subjective idea of attractiveness, and instead functioned to assure that each spool would be distinguished from the next, like the color-coded wires in the transistor, because no two spools of the same color would ever touch. Further, because the ordering was systematized, every possible combination was known in advance, and it could be guaranteed that none would be repeated. Difference was the
sole function of each spool of wood along the bar, and, as such, the purpose of the color was not to create aesthetic harmony, but stark, serviceable contrast. As an example, Cadere humorously invited his audience to imagine him camouflaged reptilian against his environment: “There is behind me a chalkboard that is green, pale green. You see me because, in relation to this chalkboard, I am a different color. If my clothes, if my skin were exactly the same pale green, you would not see me.” Like Cadere, the bars are not uniform in color, and as such there is no background against which they would not strike a conspicuous figure. In contrast to the marginal visibility of Buren’s posters, which function by nearly blending into their surroundings, Cadere’s bars were meant to pop out from, or grate against, the contexts in which he situated them. If Buren played with the idea of marginality from the strong position of being a celebrated artist, Cadere used a position of actual marginality to, as Buren later said of his influence Simon Hantaï, “show things without pointing to
them.” By the incongruity of their bright presence, the bars acted like highlighters that caused the social and procedural conventions of the art world themselves to stand out from practices that, even though drawing from the tactics of the avant-garde, were in some ways relatively routine or, one might say, decorous.

Cadere’s colorful thought experiment raises a second point, however, regarding the relationship of his work to abstract painting. In using color to signify only itself rather than using it mimetically or representationally, he linked his work to the historical avant-garde’s tradition of arguing that abstraction is a mode of realism that forefronts the objective status of the material of painting itself. His absurdist vision of the world as monochromatic abstraction invites comparison with works such as Alexander Rodchenko’s *Pure Red Color, Pure Yellow Color, Pure Blue Color* (1921), while pointing to the fact that one of color’s objective functions is to visually differentiate between things such as they frequently appear in everyday life. By suggesting that his audience cast the scene of his speech in pale green, he performs an artistic conjuring that transforms the world around him into something like a painting in order to deny the impracticality of this abstraction and insist upon a functional realism. Color’s objective status in Cadere’s work does not take on abstracted pure form but exists only according to the way that it operates relationally. The wooden spools, in all their colorful contrast, exist not in an abstracted or mimetic space but in this world, and their own differentiation from it was essential to their social use.

In its use of mathematical permutation, tautology, and conceptual notation, Cadere’s work resonated with 1960s and 1970s international conceptual art, but with the difference that his work insisted on the live situation of its display. His repetitions of imperfect serial structures recall Sol LeWitt’s obsessional systems of lines and cubes based on the subversive “idea of error”—errors with which he had firsthand experience as an artist’s assistant in 1970 when he worked on *Wall Drawing #45* at the Yvon Lambert Gallery. His use of display to counter the power of the museum or gallery draws clearly on Buren’s arguments in “Critical Limits” and other texts, at the same time that this interest in audience and accessibility recalls Lawrence Weiner’s claim that his work could theoretically—and therefore actually—belong to anyone anywhere. In his 1968 “Declaration of Intent,” Weiner wrote, “The artist may construct the piece,” and “the piece may be fabricated,” but crucially, “the piece need not be built.” This total openness would then create what Weiner called “a universal common possibility of availability.” Similarly, the rules that guided the construction of Cadere’s bar were so central to the work that it could be
argued that fabricating the bars was secondary. As Cadere noted, “In what concerns the work, the chosen rule—the mathematical permutations—is abstract and universal; it exists outside of the work. It ‘pre-exists’ it.” Although the logic of this abstract system could foresee all possible configurations of bars, it could not exhaust the variety of meanings that they would produce, or that they would attract, depending on the particularities of every possible situation in which they could be positioned. Universality was essential in both cases, then, in terms of the logic of the works produced as well as the distribution of the work to a potentially universal audience. Unlike Weiner, however, Cadere maintained control over the handmade production of his bars, and he required that the work be seen in its physical manifestation, unlike the pure conceptual state in which Weiner’s work found its completion. Indeed, like Buren, Cadere rejected associations with “the conceptual movement,” seeing it as an art historical classification. Because the bars functioned by highlighting the relationships between the actors who compose that universal, the bars needed to take shape as visual objects. If universal access and relevance were the ideal, contingency formed the basis for his critique of institutions as they actually functioned. As he explained in Louvain, “We put two people in relation in presenting one to the other. This placing in relation normally leads to a conversation. This evening the situation is different: we present an object, a thing.” Echoing the title of Buren’s 1968 exhibition at the Galerie Apollinaire, Cadere insisted that “the point is to see” (il s’agit de voir), yet rather than thinking about seeing in terms of spectatorship as either phenomenal or evidential, he emphasized the social and participatory role of the audience, continuing “and the seeing, here, leads to a discussion.” Interaction around the art object would be maximized by subverting what Cadere described as “the refuge in comforting subjectivity” that would be invited by “recourse to literature and sentimentality.” By maintaining the objective autonomy of the artwork, he noted, “all the components, all the presented coordinates, can be discussed.”

This description does not substantially differentiate it from art for art’s sake, however, which also had a use insofar as it provided disinterested fodder for the cultivation of the public sphere. Indeed, it seems that a significant aspect of Cadere’s project was the generation of a sort of mobile salon in the sense that everywhere he exhibited his work he brought with him an inexhaustible conversation that began with a description of his own work, then roamed afield. As gallerist Yvon Lambert recounts, “He was enormously interested in twentieth century art. He knew how to talk about it very, very well. At the same time, he was familiar with the art of the Eastern-European coun-
tries, from the beginning of the century to the 20s and 30s, countries where astonishing things took place, things which are now well known, but which at the time we knew very little about, or nothing at all.” Cadere made use of aesthetic discourse in order to ingratiate himself to the world of Western European dealers who were exhibiting and helping to make the careers of the conceptual artists whom Cadere considered his peers, yet this same discourse also allowed him to make an argument about the limits of freedom. By pairing artwork and conversation, he intertwined the relationship between free expression and free exhibition of his artwork, which could take place beyond restrictive boundaries, be they those of the state or those of the institutions of the art world. In reflecting on this relationship between autonomy and display, Ghislain Mollet-Viéville testified, “It was an independence that allowed him to leave it, indiscriminately, in a gallery, the artistic space par excellence, but also in the window of a baker’s shop, which obviously isn’t a representative place for art. . . . The advantage of these appearances was that they stirred comment, discussion, perhaps not at the level of the discussions that took place in his presence, but in any case discussions that could take place in the artist’s absence. We could continue to show his works, comment on them, even if he wasn’t there.” By exhibiting his work everywhere, it became possible to discuss all components and all coordinates and, moreover, to discuss them all over the city and beyond.

At the same time that the universal may offer a forum for equal access, it can similarly mask a law that becomes invisible if not inflected by deviation. In order to undercut the possibility that an ideal would subsume his work, the bars incorporated such deviation by manifesting it in their composition. Calling upon René Descartes’s observation that planes, or in the case of painting, stretched canvases (tableaux), are composed of parallel lines, Cadere observed that his own work was different from easel painting in that it emphasized a temporal succession of elements rather than providing an immediate impression, such as one might hypothetically receive when looking at a flat surface. He likened the geometrically linear alignment of the bars to the process of reading, which, he noted, presupposes a succession of different events that occur, such as in a narrative. The established systems of permutations accounted for such difference, yet because these differences were systematized, they did not manage to produce the rupture that Cadere sought. “In relation to this [mathematical] law, the only event possible,” he noted, “is an error.” To create disturbance in the universal and thereby distance it from the “completely idealistic thinking” that he associated with minimalism, he incorporated a reversal of two spools into each bar so as to disrupt the order, yet he did so subtly
by placing the errors at the interior of the sequence and without a succession of two spools of the same color so as not to allow the error to dominate the allusion to a universalizing order. He thereby sustained a balance between system and event.

The invitation for his 1975 show at the Galleria Banco in Brescia highlighted this relationship between order and disorder as it presented a series of 1s, 2s, and 3s organized in a 12-by-8 grid, captioned “eight series of permutations, each with an error.” The rational, regulatory organization of data in the gridded structure furthered the play of order and its undoing as it invited the viewer to search for the patterns that make up the permutations, while the announcement of an error frustrated attempts to do so. Searching for the error would additionally prolong the presentation of the bars by drawing the audience into the participatory process of viewing through the promised discovery of anomaly embedded among the impassive regularity of repetition. More
than an aesthetic organization asserting the rationality of the bars’ structure, the grid also provided, according to Cadere, “an exact description of the eight pieces” as they were “set at an equal distance one after the other in parallel” in an “installation of the classic type,” that is to say, against gallery walls.\footnote{36}

Seemingly with regret, Cadere referred to gallery exhibitions as showing “a negative possibility” for display that he “must not hide.”\footnote{37} He insisted that gallery exhibitions, such as those staged by many of the best-known minimalist and conceptualist artists depended on and reinforced the power of the art galleries. Yet, even as the abstract formulation that determined his own bars’ color-coding conformed to the gridded structure of the invitation, the arrangement of bars in gallery exhibitions still highlighted their relationship to real physical space and therefore contingency. At the MTL Gallery in Brussels, the ceiling was supported by four arches running the length of each of two walls of the space with a desk below one of them. Using the bars as indicators of this architectural feature of the room, Cadere leaned one bar up against the wall, centered directly under each arch. Like minimalist installations of the previous decade, his gallery display tactics pointed to the architectural space itself, indicating the floor, walls, ceilings, and other incidental features. Traversing a room, a sequence of nearly identical bars would call attention to its length as they receded off into the distance, installations in window sills would indicate the liminal spaces of the gallery as located within a larger world beyond its walls, or a bar atop a heating radiator would highlight the devices that made the space comfortable.\footnote{38} Like minimalist sculptures, Cadere’s bars additionally highlighted the body’s relationship to these spaces by causing the viewer to look for the work in atypical locations. A row of bars mounted near the ceiling would oblige the viewer to experience his or her position in relation to the work beyond the ideal position of single-point perspective by compelling the viewer to crane the neck back in searching upward, while a shock of bright color laying across the base of a wall would call attention to the forgotten marginal spaces of the gallery that often collect dust and scuff marks.

More frequently, however, Cadere’s use of the gallery signaled the social function that the space served as an institution. By choosing the arches as the points around which to anchor the logic of the bars’ disposition, Cadere was able to create a contrast between the physical space of the room and its function as a gallery since the gallerist had already established a situation of difference within the uniformity of the space by placing a desk beneath one of them. While seven of the bars leaned against a wall then, the eighth inclined toward, and was supported by, the desk, which became overdetermined by its symbolic and utilitarian functions as it was shown to be functionally identical with the
gallery as a place for the display of art, while the association of the desk with work space additionally reflected back on the gallery as an institution as it collapsed place with administration. More than an abstract system by which objects are managed, valued, and redistributed, administration additionally consists in a set of physical tasks; it is a form of work undertaken by people who themselves sit behind desks such as the one in Brussels. While the other seven bars were protected by the conventions of traditional gallery display and as such were not to be touched, the eighth bar was available for the viewer to pick up and manipulate, much as pens, typewriters, ledgers, and staplers are handled by gallerists and their secretaries. By positioning the eighth handy bar against the desk, Cadere undermined the idea that art and the gallery are autonomous from society by embedding the gallery within a larger system of work and exchange, and he did so by placing the art object directly into the hands of the people who make that system function.
Although he frequently exhibited his bars in galleries, the critical meaning of the work was located in the streets. “One must—and exactly to mark the independence with regard to power,” he told the Louvain audience, “exhibit also outside of the artistic sanctuaries: in a street, a metro, a restaurant, finally everywhere, since the presence of the wall is not necessary.” While the gridded numbers of the Brescia invitation referenced the relative independence of the concept from the object through the use of a symbolic system of representation, a second invitation published by Galleria Banco accentuated the importance of transforming ideas into visible, or even tangible, objects, as it presented a full-page photograph of the work’s exhibition: walking down the street, the artist traverses the entryway to the gallery with one of his bars cantilevered over his left shoulder, the bar acting as a bridge between these two worlds. In the distance it is just possible to make out the word “Banco,” spelled across the entryway of the gallery, which nearly disappears into the shadows of receding arcade while the artist and his work occupy a brightly
illuminated foreground set against the edifice’s exterior wall. Stepping away from the large archway that takes up the majority of the width of the image and frames the gallery in the background, Cadere simultaneously steps away from the gallery while exiting its photographic representation as, cropped into the extreme left margins of the scene, his left hand and foot extend past the photograph’s edge. With his body turning away from the camera and his head slightly lowered, the nearly six-foot-long bar becomes the focus of the image as it juts out across the darkness of the arcade that it leaves behind. On Lynda Morris’s copy of the invitation, Cadere used a red pen to draw in some facial hair and a sack from the end of his pole so that he looks like a vagabond. While the gridded invitation captured and isolated the bars’ relationship between abstract order and error, the photograph in the second functions as an image of the last step in their progressive independence, as the stationary bars leaning against the walls inside pull away from the support offered by the gallery’s walls, transition to the liminal space of administrative functionality, and finally gain the independence to be found in the space of everyday life.

Calligrams and Incompatibility

The Banco photograph captures Cadere’s gallery practice, yet, like Buren, he was careful to distinguish between the artwork and its representation through documentary media. In 1974 he used a photograph similar to the Banco one to speak to this point directly. Reproduced in a series of four enlargements, a horizontally oriented, black and white photograph taken by Bernard Borgeaud shows Cadere turned squarely away from the camera so as to display to full advantage the bar that he carries over his shoulder as it spans, and extends beyond, the full width of the frame. A brief textual description of the work, broken into four fragments, is printed along the bottom of each enlargement so that when viewed together the statement reads as a single whole, in this way reproducing the temporal “narrative” development Cadere spoke of at the Louvain lecture. At the same time, however, the text and image collude in delegitimating themselves as presentations of the work. “Exhibited where it is seen,” the caption reads, “this work is contrary to the text and photo printed here. Dependent on the constraints of this book text and photo have a single relation with what they describe: incompatibility.” This formula of text and image insisting on their nonidentity with their presumed referent echoes René Magritte’s painting The Treachery of Images (1929), in which a pipe appears above a text that insists “this is not a pipe” (Ceci n’est pas une pipe). Although the psychological depth and literary motifs of Surrealism had gone out of fashion during the 1960s, elements of Magritte’s influence lingered in the linguistic
play and absurdist literalism of Marcel Broodthaers, at whose exhibitions Cadere himself exhibited, and more generally in the evocations of imaginative freedom that flowed through the rhetoric of the May Movement. In 1968, Michel Foucault published a short book, *This Is Not a Pipe*, in homage to the recently deceased painter. In it, he demonstrated that Magritte’s works function as what Foucault called “unraveled calligrams,” in the sense that they take the word and image that normally come together in the calligram to form a unified whole and instead present them separately on the canvas in order to undermine the calligram’s specific function. The calligram, Foucault argues, normally creates an identity between text and image with the effect that they produce a “double cipher” that fixes meaning to an extent that neither text nor image could do alone. The calligram would guarantee an easy translation of ideas across media of reproduction such that, for example, the word “pipe” written out in a shape that appears to be that of a pipe would communicate precisely and unequivocally the concept of a hollow device designed for burning and inhaling substances. Whereas in the calligram, text and image occupy the same space, in “unraveling” and setting them side-by-side “the common place . . . has disappeared” along with our commonplace myths of communicative transparency, in which we look at a picture of a pipe and say “that is a pipe,” or, in the case of Cadere’s work, look at a photograph of a round bar of wood and say “that is a round bar of wood.”

There is a determinative distinction between representations of Cadere’s bar, such as in text or photograph, and immediate presentations of the object itself. Text and photograph cannot help but give rise to the distance that separates live presentation of the object from representation, as it freezes the artist and his bar in a single moment. Repeating the photograph four times visualized its difference as a medium of reproduction distinct from the scene it isolates and records. Rather than see Cadere and his bar in the photograph, the fact of representation itself comes to the fore. With each repetition of the same, the information in the photograph diminishes, representing less and less of its subject as it becomes ossified into an image of itself. There is no bar to be seen there. What is exhibited is a photograph. In this way, the photograph enacts the separation of resemblance from affirmation that Foucault identifies as the operation of the unraveled calligram and replaces it with the more loosely circumscribed relations of similitude. Whereas resemblance is on the side of representation and presupposes a model that can act as a key to the meaning “which rules over it,” similitudes are based on a structure of repetition “which ranges across it.” Text and photo repeat and circulate discursively in reference to the bar even as they remain incompatible with each
other. While the text flatly declares its own inadequacy, each reprinting of the single image drives home the photograph’s inability to substitute for the experience of seeing the bar in the round. The text’s description that “a round bar of wood is an assemblage of painted segments in which the length is equal to the diameter and follow one another according to a method comporting errors” fails to provide a vision of the wide range of brilliant color combinations in groupings variously arrayed in accordance with their number and scale. Similarly, the still studio photographs of the bar balanced on the artist’s shoulder give no indication of the use to which he put the object as a signal of independence, as it escaped the display conventions dictated by books, galleries, and museums. Rejecting the ambiguities and slippages of similitude, Cadere insisted on presence.

While Cadere emphasized the distinction between the bars and their secondary layers of representation, be they in the form of photograph, text, or curatorial program, he was not antipathetic to them, and indeed seems to have considered his bars to be operating in a parallel mode. In a series of letters to Lambert that Cadere composed on his deathbed in 1978, the artist, who had been a classical languages student as a youth in Romania, reflected on the form and function of his work and observed, “I am astonished by the rapport between a round bar of wood and language. My work is by definition visual,” and with slight variation, he echoed the statement printed below the Borgeaud photographs, reinforcing that “it exists where it is seen.”

This association of language and visuality had arisen at the beginning of his career in Paris, when he adapted his concepts for the medium of the press. In 1971 he participated in a roundtable discussion on the “Role and Social Situation of the Artist,” which was published in Artitudes, an art journal that promoted body art and other anti-academic forms. Among columns of text recounting the proceedings, he had the word écriture printed four times, each time framed in a box, printed larger than the surrounding text, and each time in a different font so as to single it out as a distinct entity on the page while transforming the word into a calligram. Through its framing and the stylization of its font, the word became a picture composed of lines forming letters in sequence that visualized what it signified linguistically. This is not an unraveled calligram, but, rather, it is the unique instance in which the word and image that compose the calligram are identical. Written out, “écriture” conflates presentation and representation without a gap between them. At the same time, “écriture” functions differently from the rest of the words on the Artitudes page in that no other provides a picture of its signification. In recognizing this, the reader is reminded of the gap between text and referent, or the fact that, as Cadere
CE TRAVAIL EST CONTRAIRE AUX TEXTE ET PHOTO ICI IMPRIMÉS. DÉPENDANT DES CONTRAINTES DE CE LIVRE.

TEXTE ET PHOTO ONT UN SEUL RAPPORT AVEC CE QU'ILS DÉCRivent : L'INCOMPATIBILITÉ. CADÈRE, 1974.
would state two years later beneath the Borgeaud photographs, the words that the artists speak and the works and social situations they describe are incompatible. His work is like language not because language represents it, but because just as language performs its function wherever it is, Cadere’s work should be considered exhibited wherever it is, without dependence on the context in which it is seen.

The issues of representation in Cadere’s calligram-like text/photo projects are conveyed in the logic that he used to display his bars. If an image of a pipe is not a pipe, then similarly a gallery exhibition of art is not the same as an artwork being made visible for public consideration. Fundamentally, the problem of representation was in its ability to fix meaning or sway interpretation. Maintaining a distinction between his work and its corollary similarities carried over into the independence that he sought to maintain from arts institutions, such that rather than considering the gallery show representative, it became one instance of exhibition among many in which the work was shown. Insisting that his work was “exhibited where it is seen” allowed him to play up cultural distinctions between visibility and exhibition and put pressure on the cultural presumption that aligns exhibition with gallery and museum spaces. Opening a gap between art institutions and exhibition was
his objective when he challenged the tautology of Claura and Denizot’s show that declared itself *A Painting Exhibition*. Rather than countering, as Magritte might have, by pointing out the distinction between the exhibition and the work it represents, he mounted his own exhibition with the curators’ (unwilling) support, thereby effectively arguing against a hierarchy in which a well-networked exhibition like Claura and Denizot’s would have priority over Cadere showing his bar wherever he went. By exhibiting his work in a way that was a procedural extension of the intention he had for the intrinsic qualities of the object, he further sought to collapse work with exhibition. In comparison, *A Painting Exhibition* was relatively distant from the art objects that it would represent.

Pushing the playful antagonism against the two, Cadere sent out an announcement for a second exhibition featuring the same bar that had disappeared from *A Painting Exhibition*. In this instance, the invitation listed the different locations for four bars, each of the same dimensions, and each composed of three colors. Whereas for the other bars he provided the addresses for art spaces in Berlin, Naples, and Paris, for the other, he gave the addresses and phone numbers of Claura and Denizot, along with an explanation of how the bar had disappeared. None of the bars would be simultaneously visible, but one was un-see-able. As a sort of antagonism against the visual possession of the audience, the exhibition existed as a purely conceptual object that positioned an imagined constellation of autonomous objects beyond the ability of an individual to requisition one of them.

Earlier, in 1973, Cadere had been invited by Anka Ptaszkowska to show at an experimental gallery of conceptual art, Gallery Six, that she ran with Claura and in consultation with Buren. For this exhibition, Cadere staged a similar critique to the one that he would mount at 16 Place Vendôme, but by different means. Mindful of the struggles for power taking place between artists and institutions at the time, Ptaszkowska devised a strategy for an exhibition that was intended to put in relief the argument that “every exhibition is like a coffee grinder that grinds up artists’ works.” The resulting exhibition showed the works of ten artists, including Cadere, according to a mathematically systematized schedule so that each of the artists’ works would be visible in different configurations across a period of thirty-six days. This resulted in a gross inequity of exposure for the various artists, against which “the artists were invited to defend themselves.” The only artist of the group who truly did, according to Ptaszkowska, was Cadere, who concocted a work composed of two parts: a round bar of wood that would be in the gallery during the entire thirty-six days of the exhibition, and an object label that Ptaszkowska would
Quatre barres de bois rond, chacune étant composée de 21 segments dont la longueur - 100 millimètres - est égale à leur diamètre. Ces segments, peints successivement en différentes couleurs, sont assemblés conformément à un système de permutations comportant chaque fois une erreur.

1) B 0 0 2 0 1 3 0 0 =100= 10x11=
   rouge - jaune - violet
   se trouve à Berlin (galerie Folker Skulima, 68 Fasanenstrasse, 1 Berlin 15, tel : 881 82 80)
2) B 0 2 1 3 0 0 0 0 =100= 11x12=
   jaune - blanc - orange
   se trouve à Naples (galerie Modern Art Agency - Lucio Amelio - 58 piazza dei Martiri, Napoli, tel : 399 023)
3) B 1 0 2 0 3 0 0 0 =100= 11x12=
   noir - jaune - rouge
   est disparue en Juin 1973 du cagibi d’un appartement situé au 16, place Vendôme, 75001 Paris, pendant que dans le reste du local se déroulait une exposition de peinture réunissant certains peintres qui mettraient la peinture en question. Comme cette barre de bois rond aurait été installée dans le cagibi par les organisateurs, pour toute information s’adresser à :
   Michel Claura, 1 villa Suerat, 75014 Paris, tel : 331 88 02
   René Denizot, 117 rue Championnet, 75018 Paris, tel : 225 01 07
4) B 1 2 0 0 3 0 0 0 =100= 11x12=
   noir - blanc - rouge
   est visible en permanence - durant une période indéterminée - sur le balcon situé au 6ème étage du 139, bd, Saint-Germain, 75006 Paris
   (au-dessus du café "Le Saint-Claude")

André Cadere  
Paris, le 8 Décembre 1975

Figure 3.14. André Cadere, invitation for presentations of round bars of wood at various locations while implicating Michel Claura and René Denizot in the disappearance of the bar that Cadere brought to the opening, 1975. © Estate of André Cadere and Galerie Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.
affix to the wall on the days when his work was scheduled to be on view. Divided into two propositions, section one of the label announced to the reader that the bar “could be seen” during the entire duration of the exhibition, while section two stated that on that given day it was considered exhibited. It read, “From the perspective of the exhibition organized by Madame Anka Ptaszkowska (exhibition taking place in the same space) the round bar of wood described above should be considered as work number . . . series . . . by artist number . . .”49 The blanks that the gallerist would fill in with numerical values highlighted the mathematical rigidity that reduced the artists to the curator’s counted coffee beans. Cadere’s own enumeration countered by demonstrating that, in fact, two separate exhibitions were taking place: his and that intended by the gallery. He marked the distinction between the two through his wording, which contrasted a work that “is seen” against the perspective of the “exhibition.” In both the organizers’ conception and Cadere’s, there was a direct link between visibility and exhibition, yet Cadere’s wall label forced Ptaszkowska into a contradiction whereby her determination of whether or not the bar was exhibited depended not on a relationship to its visibility, but solely on the authority of the gallerist. As Cadere concluded: “Thus, the organizers were in their turn, caught in their own trap.”50 Whereas Magritte’s declaration “this is not a pipe” highlighted the difference between language and its referents, Cadere showed that in the case of exhibition, the referent is ambivalent, and that our understanding of the relationship between visibility and exhibition is determined nominally by social conventions, while showing the distinction to be an absurd exercise of power.

Frequently, however, Cadere himself performed the gestures of institutional authority by producing timetables for displays that would take place in the city streets and mailing them out as exhibition announcements to the contacts he had accumulated through the process of meeting people at exhibitions. One such timetable provides a schedule of twenty consecutive locations where Cadere would be with his work on June 25, 1974. As the announcement indicated, beginning at 16:00 (4:00 p.m.), he would travel from the Pont Neuf metro station along the odd-numbered sides of streets to a series of intersections. He noted his anticipated coordinates with to-the-minute precision (e.g., “16h36–coin quai de Conti/rue Guénégaud”) until he descended into the Saint-Germain-des-Prés metro, “quai direction Porte d’Orléans,” where the exhibition abruptly came to an end at “17h28,” as though he and the bar vanished two minutes before the half hour, unavailable to be seen by any of the passengers on what would likely have been a crowded rush-hour train car on that Tuesday evening as the train approached the Montparnasse
hub. He repeated this exact exhibition on June 25, 1975, this time following the even-numbered side of the street, and repeated it again on June 25, 1976, this time reversing the course of travel and following the odd side of the street. According to Marcelis, people would show up along the routes, with itineraries in hand, to see Cadere walk through the streets. For Agalides, Cadere’s improvised movements through the city were “an affirmation of what totalitarianism prohibits and denies,” a “therapeutic exercise,” and refutation of “the maniacal planning of production, timetables, uniforms, surveillance” that the Eastern bloc used to guarantee coordination. Rather than negating totalitarian structures and strictures, however, Cadere frequently mimicked them with the hyper-precision of his own timetables, which determined with seemingly arbitrary authority when a viewer can become an audience to an artwork that is present even if not on display. Reversing Agalides’s argument then, Cadere’s manipulations of timing in exhibitions such as those he staged both at Ptaszkowska’s gallery and in his solo show draw a parallel between communist Romania and the arts institutions of the West with the effect that he remained unaligned with both.

If Ptaszkowska’s curatorial program acknowledged the challenges posed by institutional critique without attempting to modify institutional authority, collaborations with experimental gallerists whose projects complemented his own provided opportunities to envision a new synthesis among cultural workers. Art historian Ida Biard’s curatorial project the Galerie des Locataires (Renter’s Gallery) is notable for the degree to which it corresponded to Cadere’s mobile and anti-Establishment practices. Having moved to Paris from Zagreb to study, Biard occupied a similar “frontier” position from which she sought to realize a socialist ideal of freedom within a spectacularized Western art world. Her commitment was to experimental, “dematerialized” artworks that sought to merge art into life, which she additionally manifested by dematerializing her gallery into a set of mail art exhibitions and a physical location in Paris that she called “French Window”—a space that was literally a window of the apartment that she rented at 14 rue de l’Avre, in the fifteenth arrondissement, in which she posted artworks and around which artists would sometimes perform. The Galerie des Locataires sought to erase dominant binaries such as artist/curator, individual/collective, and private/public, a process that included altering the terminology of display to emphasize that she “communicated” rather than “exhibited” works. Biard considered herself to be not the director of a gallery, but a “tenant” in a space, as the word locataire signaled. As art historian Ivana Bago notes, in adopting this position “she was tied not to property, but to precarity.” Indeed, the language that Bago uses to describe
the position of the tenant and the metaphor of the “window” in which Biard showed works resonates with the language frequently used to describe Cadere’s mobile practice. Concerning Biard’s position negotiating societal influences of the East and West, Bago uses the language of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to describe her as a “nomad” whose window “occupied and inhabited space through constant distribution and deterritorialization.” Additional-ly, like Cadere, who chose to retain his Romanian citizenship while living in Paris, and additionally referred to himself as a “squatter in the art world,” Bago writes, “the tenant is a permanent guest and a temporary host, free of the bounds of territory and possession, he or she is always ready to move on.”

Their shared commitment to deterritorializing boundaries included being a pointedly bad guest. Such was the case in 1973 when the Galerie des Lo-
cataires supported an exhibition that Cadere held, uninvited, at an opening for the celebrated Italian easel painter Valerio Adami, at Galerie Maeght, an institution that was instrumental in attempting to return Paris to its pre-war cultural stature by exhibiting an international selection of young artists whose works resonated with those of the historical avant-garde. According to Cadere's recollection, to protect itself against his anticipated incursion, the gallery stationed an employee at the door who announced upon his arrival, “You do not have the right to enter with this weapon. This is an honest establishment,” and confiscated the work. After relinquishing the bar and insinuating himself among the crowd, Cadere shook a second small bar out of his pant leg, thereby successfully hatching a “presentation of a work” complete with apposite discussion. Cadere contrasted the “entirely pacific, non-aggressive” guerrilla actions that he undertook in exhibiting his work at other exhibitions against iconoclastic acts that involve physically attacking works of art. His own bar was “a very little thing,” he pointed out, the presence of which would not prevent an exhibition from taking place. Despite his pacifist claims, however, Cadere used Cold War language to argue that “the war takes place on the plane of the essential, ideological, and the aggression, the violence
always comes from the side of power.” In a recounting of the event that he published in the next issue of Flash Art, he declared that art that is made to hang in galleries does nothing but reinforce the power that the directors of these galleries have over the art.

In other instances, however, Cadere devised strategies that foregrounded the reciprocity between artist and gallery according to a model that did not work to reinforce the power of one side over the other. Six Pieces by Cadere (1974) re-created a circuit between Cadere and Biard, but further extended it to incorporate Ferdinand Spillemaeckers’ MTL Gallery in Brussels after Spillemaeckers defended Cadere in a conflict that had taken place at the Congress of Conceptual Art three months earlier. For Six Pieces Cadere extended Biard’s demonstration that a gallery space was not necessary by showing his work not in her apartment/gallery window, but in the street, and nearly three miles away on the avenue des Gobelins. This contradiction would confront Cadere’s authority and that of galleries by overcoming the double limitations that galleries posed on the visibility of artworks first by mounting them within enclosed spaces and second by determining when works are viewable according to the gallery hours and the limited amount of time allotted for each exhibition. He countered the conventions of gallery display with his own ironic legalese. Like his later timetable announcements, the one for Six Pieces listed the hours during which he would be exhibiting his work, yet these times did not correspond to the hours when the work would be visible. Instead, he specified that “after 2:30 (and before 12:30) the work was no longer (not yet) considered as being exhibited, even if it was seen in the space of the exhibition. Similarly, outside of this space, for example several meters from there in front of the house at no. 9,” where Cadere had stationed a bar on a balcony, “the work was not considered as being exhibited, even if it was seen during the hours of the exhibition.” This contradicted his own determination that the work would be “exhibited where it is seen,” again highlighting the irony of the distinction between visibility and exhibition, which Cadere considered to be a corrective to Ptaszkowska’s exhibition, which took place simultaneously.

If Six Pieces asserted the importance of dislocation from the gallery, at the same time it indicated the object’s essential dependence on the situation of time and place as constitutive of the object’s identity. As a paratext to the exhibition, the invitation design communicated key information about how the presentation of the bar should be interpreted. Just under the title were listed the days, hours, and addresses where the bar would be shown. The vertical columns of identical names and numerals that fall into line with the repetition of the same data day after day highlight the fact that the only thing that changed
was the day of the week and the numbers one through six that corresponded to each of the “six pieces.” As the only two variables, the invitation suggests that it was the uniqueness of the day itself that defined the work. To reinforce this point, during this six-day period, even the bar remained constant. While Cadere repeatedly insisted upon the singular necessity of showing the bar, this was not due to some self-evidence of the object as much as it was a question of the showing. *Il s’agit de voir, not il s’agit de barre.* Indeed, by emphasizing the presentation itself, the work became less self-referential in its objectivity as it opened up to the constitutive contingency that surrounded it, whether that was the street on an April afternoon, the gallery opening of another artist, or a conventional gallery installation.

A spread that Biard published in *+ 0*, the art journal that she edited, several months after *Six Pieces’* second exhibition at the MTL Gallery, illustrated the two exhibitions aptly. On the left page, a large black and white photograph shows Cadere walking down the street. As in the Brescia and Borgeaud photographs, his back is turned to the camera, and the bar, tipped over his facing shoulder, is in full view. He shuffles past a restaurant awning advertising Kronenbourg beer and a tree that, in early spring, has yet to bloom. A man with a briefcase passes on the left, and a short woman with a scarf tied around her head gesticulates excitedly to an interlocutor outside the frame. Below the photograph, a caption explains that the scene is an “illustration for the exhibition that took place from 1 to 7, ave. des Gobelins, Paris 13th,” and identifies the exhibition’s sponsor as the Galerie des Locataires. Similarly, the page on the right represents the exhibition such as it was sponsored by the MTL, yet the two pages are conspicuously similar. In the photograph printed at the top of this second page, Cadere cuts a familiar figure while the same leafless tree frames the left side of the photograph, the briefcase-carrying man strides around him, and indistinguishable gestures express the thoughts of an uncannily recognizable woman in the foreground. With every shadow and scrap of litter in place, it becomes clear that the same negative has been printed twice. If there were any doubt that the images were one and the same, the caption that is itself also identical to that of the facing page underscores that we are still looking at Cadere pacing up and down the avenue des Gobelins. All that has changed is the gallery information and date. Captioning the second printing of the photograph from the first exhibition with the information for the second tightened the affinity between the fragments of information such as they create a discursive realm distinct from the events to which they refer.

The interchangeability of the two images, captioned with different information, effectively unraveled, again, the bar and the modes of reproduction
that would allow it to be visualized in other times and places. The identical photographs indicate the similitude between the two exhibitions, yet no one day of presentation could be understood as replaceable with another. A text printed at the bottom of the two pages explains that while habitually it is the galleries that are stationary and whose “social reason” remains the same as changing art exhibits pass through them, in this case, “the roles are inverted,” as the work remains the same and the “social reason” of the galleries changes. If art shown in galleries takes on the meaning of the gallery, then in this case the galleries would signify according to the meaning that Cadere assigned for them—that the gallery has no other purpose than to promote art. Moving the art itself beyond the walls of a gallery, or to another city altogether, put the gallery in this position, since the only label that would be affixed to the work would be the invitation, which was not immediately evident to passersby. Indeed, the solo exhibitions that Cadere executed without any institutional support were largely indistinguishable from those for which a gallery supplied publicity as both included the artist exhibiting in the streets, and both generally involved the use of gallery spaces, regardless of whether or not Cadere was invited.

Widely distributed materials were constituent elements of Cadere’s project, but they remained secondary as promotion or as a record of work that insisted on a presence in time and space, such as Walter Benjamin identified as an aspect of the authentic object that such mechanical reproduction seeks, and fails, to replicate. Contrast the object of the bars themselves, such as one sees them today at museum retrospectives, against what would have been the experience of encountering Cadere himself during the 1970s, Simon Neuenschwander has argued that “the photographs, invitation cards and films” that are left over “provide an incomparably stronger impression than the real bars themselves. The aura of the objects seems to intensify especially through these documents: they provide the most important context and, retrospectively, they are capable of representing the significance of the bars as powerful and enigmatic aesthetic instruments.” Without the documentation of their guerrilla potential, the bars communicate only their “negative possibility.” Yet there is not a “sense of the universal equality of things” in Cadere’s use of discursive media. Rather, the craftedness of the bars, with their hand-chiseled spools and the imperfections that accumulated on their surface with use, lay stress on their unique existences. It would seem that by simultaneously insisting on the presence of an original object, and its presence everywhere as it transgressed physical and symbolic boundaries, he attempted to incorporate the ability to be reactivated through encounters with new contexts—such as
is generally the province of the reproduction—into the authenticity of experience provided by the original object itself. As Cadere passed through crowds, retail spaces, galleries, and pubs, the bar took part in the rituals of everyday life. If he intended to attribute aura to the everyday, it was to revive a sense of participation and presence of the individual in it.

**Space and Politics**

Developing the theme of artistic autonomy, Cadere attacked another prominent strategy of avant-garde artistic production from the time: the in situ. While clearly influenced by minimalist display practices, he was critical of what he understood as a dependence that much minimalist art had on the institutional spaces that showed and promoted it. As the first part of a series of four exhibitions that fell under the theme *Space and Politics* (1975–1976), he held a debate at the Elsa von Honolulu Loringhoven gallery in Ghent. Here he presented a critique of site-specific works focusing on Carl Andre’s *39th Copper Cardinal* (1975), which had recently been purchased by a local museum. Andre’s work consisted of a grid of copper plates laid out on the floor of the museum below a fresco from the Italian Renaissance—a relationship that Cadere observed was reinforced by a postcard that Andre authorized depicting his copper tiles, a decorative framing element on the wall that the work abutted, and the fresco on the ceiling. Cadere argued that works like Andre’s, which were created in relation to architecture, were dependent on that architecture as well as the invisible economic power that backs it, and he likened the contemporary art market to the princely patronage of the cinquecento that had financed the production of works like the museum’s fresco. Cadere’s evocation of Renaissance patronage and the contemporary art market, as well as his own engagements with the spaces of everyday life, resonates with the critique that Peter Bürger had forwarded in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, which had been published the previous year. Cadere’s attack on Andre suggested a distinction between two different forms of autonomy: a “bourgeois autonomy” associated with the institutionalization of art independent of the means-ends relations of life praxis, and the type of relative autonomy that Cadere aimed for, that is, an autonomy that took a critical distance from arts institutions by stepping beyond the spaces of the museum or gallery, which included weaving aspects of life praxis into its critique. Although Andre’s sculpture could be said to achieve bourgeois autonomy as it pursued, arguably, exclusively aesthetic interests, it fell short of meeting the criteria of avant-gardist art. As long as art remained within the ideal sphere of art institutions separated from life praxis, Bürger argued, any better society that it might attempt to construct
would not be realizable due to the fact that such art is relegated to the realm of fiction and “semblance.” Although it could be argued that autonomous art itself offers a challenge to convention through the innovative, often non-representational forms that it presents, such art’s promise is limited by the institutional context that frames it, and causes it to represent “bourgeois art” first and foremost. At worst, such art affirms the “bad society” that produced it. Although André was an iconic figure of the American neo-avant-garde, Cadere’s critique positioned him within the tradition of the bourgeoisie such as it adhered to the separation of art into its own autonomous realm.

As a contrast, Cadere offered his own mobile aestheticism in an effort to reorganize the relationship between institutional and extra-institutional praxes. His exhibition in Ghent included stepping beyond the “white, ideal and empty space of the gallery” to produce an extensive possibility of exhibition location, which included paying uninvited house calls with his art to those on the gallery’s mailing list—a move that inadvertently approached the limits of artistic risk-taking when he was greeted at one address by a man with a gun. From Ghent, he traveled to Milan, where his exhibition took place entirely in a gallery space, though it abandoned the installation services offered by gallery architecture, instead using the gallery as a meeting point where the artist was personally on hand to discuss the work with visitors. At London’s Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Cadere shouldered his bar every day from noon to 3 p.m. through the museum’s galleries, offices, restaurant, toilets, and various other “fortuitous locations,” where chance encounters lead to discussions on the relationship between space and politics. While the ICA show demonstrated the independence of the round bar of wood in its relation to the directed spaces of the institution, this event was far less successful than the simultaneous underground exhibitions of his work that Lynda Morris at the Slade School helped him organize every evening from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. at pubs around the city that were frequented by members of London’s conceptual art community. Whereas only a few people visited the ICA, Cadere noted that the pub shows were very well attended, since, in his words, “all the important English dealers, collectors, American collectors, magazines came. Everyone came.” Finally, the “crescendo” of *Space and Politics* ended with an exhibition under a bus shelter in Paris.

The range of spaces at which Cadere showed his work undermined the special claim that institutions make to being privileged sites of art exhibition. Instead, Cadere created an alternative system for determining the value of potential venues—a system that humorously exposed the institutions’ ideological contraband by proposing equivalences based on avowed functions.
Regarding the end of *Space and Politics*, Cadere quipped, “The choice of a bus shelter proved to be right because between 6 and 7 pm it rained a lot on that day in Paris, so everyone could very well leave the traditional shelter of the museum.” While convention typically positions the gallery or museum as a stable ground against which artworks differentiate as figures, Cadere inverted this relationship so that the work was the stable, unchanging ground against which the institution and even its functional replaceability were thrown into relief. By parading his critique in the spaces of everyday life, he showed art institutions to be embedded in life praxis and any claim to autonomy to be relationally defined. The relationships between the spaces in which Cadere showed were not based on resemblances in which the street or the bus shelter modeled itself after the gallery as its fictive double—these are not images of exhibitions; rather, his promenading in these spaces produces them as alternatives, or similitudes, so that the space of exhibition and the space of everyday praxis intermingle and become coextensive.

Although art historian Cornelia Lauf’s analysis of Cadere conveys her esteem for his work, she nonetheless found a suitably analogous character from the history of theory, philosopher Maurice Blanchot’s sad sack of a “man in the...
street.” The comparison is not wholly uncalled for as Cadere himself described his project using nearly identical terms to those Blanchot chose to describe the quality of everyday life. Cadere: “One can essentially say of this work that I produce it and that I show it, the one being the complement of the other, all of it constituting an everyday and ungraspable activity.” Blanchot: “Whatever its other aspects, the everyday has this essential trait: it allows no hold. It escapes.” As Blanchot saw it, by the end of the 1950s, French culture had become sufficiently saturated by domestic technologies that the bored citizen of everyday life had fallen asleep before the half-glow of televised spectacle. An anonymous automaton, the man in the street escaped social encounters as he went about his preprogrammed daily activities. As the animated Cadere progressed through his territories at a snail’s pace, placing one foot in front of the next with deliberation, then stopping to glance at the activity streaming around him, his contemplative attention to the banal encouraged the viewer to steep in the humdrum. Whereas the passersby were motivated by their destination, the ambiguity of Cadere’s purpose calls attention to presence itself. On one hand, such purposelessness reflects boredom, which, Blanchot observed, is the consequence of the unperceived becoming perceptible. During an exhibition in Genoa, Cadere commented on the nondescript exhibition locations, noting that the work was shown “at the whim of the different movements that only a city can trigger: encounters, curiosity, fatigue, boredom.” Yet his peripatetic weaving through the streets in an attempt to “establish disorder” only recalls Blanchot’s anonymous “man in the street”; it does not enact it. Rather than a holdover from Vianson-Ponté’s pre-1968 days of “boredom,” his presence in public space figures the chorus of pedestrians whose idle footsteps Michel de Certeau would theorize during the early 1980s. They are not blindly directed by habit, but, rather, through “tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation,” they give shape to space through “pedestrian speech acts.” This is not a man in the street, he is a man of the street, the un-self-conscious agent equivalent of Cadere in that the movements are not, as de Certeau differentiates, “localized.” Instead, they actively “spatialize.”

In inhabiting both everyday and art institutional spaces, Cadere took on roles that situated him alternatively as a recognizable figure of artistic authority when he showed in specifically art-world contexts, and as an anonymous passerby in the crowd in the spaces of everyday life. Promenading through the streets physically did the work of removing art from autonomous institutions and embedding it within the space of daily life, as Cadere merged with the people that surrounded and absorbed him. A photograph from Six Pieces that was taken from inside a café provides a perspective that illustrates the
continuity between Cadere’s exhibitions of his artworks and the exhibition of oneself that individuals perform when they step out onto the streets and put themselves on public display. Embedded within the café’s interior, the photographer’s camera captures not only Cadere on the street, but also the activity of spectatorship in the silhouettes of foreground patrons who look out onto the sidewalk, while the folding doors frame the street scene and create a vision of the city as spectacle into which the artist inserts himself. The image recalls those produced a century earlier by impressionist painters and photographers as they captured the radical transformations that Paris had undergone under Haussmannization. The process redeveloped the city as a spectacle in which the bourgeoisie would stroll up and down the city streets, exhibiting their class dominance through the public presentation of their wealth and leisure. A series of photographs taken by Borgeaud documenting Six Pieces provides an image of daily life on one of Haussmann’s boulevards in 1973. As it makes clear, by Cadere’s time, the stroll had been overtaken by the hustle and bustle of a city significantly larger and more densely populated than it had been in the nineteenth century. The photos show Cadere as he walks down the street, slowly putting one foot in front of the other, as couples, waiters, children, and others flow around him in a continuous stream of pedestrian traffic. His deliberate pacing holds the space around him and calls attention to the process of being in public, rather than quickly moving through it on the way to somewhere else.

Cadere’s mode of presenting himself in public space does not call for a return to nineteenth-century bourgeois spectacle, however, as much as it resonates with the occupations of public space that took place in 1968. Using spray paint to reproduce the linear successions of colors in his bars across the city, his graffiti created a combination of textual and visual representations of the round bars of wood that merged with his displacements across Paris. The locations, like his peripatetic meanderings, were diverse and decentralized. He sprayed graffiti along a perimeter fence in the middle-class neighborhood surrounding the Parc Montsouris; in the heart of the Saint-Germain gallery district on the rue Visconti; and on a palisade at a construction site beneath high-rises in a popular neighborhood of an outer arrondissement. The marks of the spray paint left a record of Cadere’s presence, an abstract mode of communicating, “Cadere was here.” Just as taggers use spray paint to give private names to, and claim, public spaces, so Cadere’s graffiti acted as a signature that recorded the human presence that animates a city. Although the bands of color did not display an overt message, the very gesture of producing graffiti recalled the slogans that had been sprayed across the city during the days of
May ’68. With the movement’s imperative that the everyday citizen should “seize speech,” the public began using the walls to encourage each other to “live without dead time,” experience unshackled joy, and exhume the ludic leisure that has been paved over by the drab necessity of daily life.

The abstraction of Cadere’s own marks entered into an assortment of political street interventions that ranged from the precise and specific, such as posters that named people, places, and dates for meetings; to the more aphoristic, philosophical, or inspirational; to the abstract, as in the case of Buren’s *affichages sauvages,* or Cadere’s spray paintings of colors in linear successions. Reflecting on the role of intellectuals during the May Movement, Blanchot wrote about their desire to merge into the crowds rather than participate from a lofted remove, and the way that graffiti spoke to this ambition:

When some of us took part in the May ’68 movement, we hoped to preserve ourselves from any pretension to singularity, and in a certain way we succeeded in not being considered exceptional, but like everyone else. So much did the force of the anti-authoritarian movement render it easy to forget particularities, and to not allow the young, the old, the unknown, the too well known, to be distinguished the one from the other, as if despite the difference and the incessant controversies, each person recognized himself or herself in the anonymous words written on the walls—words
which even if they happened to be elaborated in common, were never, in the end, proclaimed to be the words of an author, being everyone’s and for everyone, in all of their contradictory formulations.77

The ambient association that Blanchot evoked is not so different from the kind of politics in which Cadere engaged in the following years, whether in his stated ambition of bringing people together in dialogue or traces left on walls. Borgeaud recalls that he and Cadere sought “to change the manner of thinking. To change the manner of conceiving relations, structures,” yet they were not interested in “events” or the “factual” elements of politics.78 Nevertheless, Cadere seems to have appreciated the importance of political specificity to structural change as he courted references to people, places, and laws in the locations he chose for his photos. In one instance he underlined a series of flyers that had been posted on the rue Visconti, calling people to join a demonstration that drew around 200,000 people to protest the murder of Maoist activist and Renault factory worker Pierre Overney in 1972. In another action on the same street, his signature succession of colors hovers in the space between the words “soutenons” and “Pleven,” committing his support for the 1972 law named for the Minister of Justice René Pleven that outlawed racist speech in
CHAPTER 3

France. While he may never have spoken to his friends and collaborators about Overney or Pleven, the causes that they symbolized resonate with his rejection of authoritarianism in the case of Overney, and his insistence on individual liberty in that of Pleven. The social encounter might not be immediate in the cases of Cadere’s abstract interventions, but the graffiti created the image of an imagined potential conversation, and collective process of interpretation, taking place among a socially diverse community, linked across a range of spaces.

This community included those in the art world, but it also broadened its reach to all of the specific individuals with whom Cadere came into contact in his meanderings. These included other émigrés like Agalides, who met him unexpectedly while he was showing his work at the Louvre, as well as the “transvestites” and “rockers” that he befriended and invited to his artist talk “Establishing Disorder,” thereby creating, as Ghislain Mollet-Viéville described, a mise-en-abyrne of the talk’s theme, and the homeless with whom he would strike up conversation about his work in the metro. The speech of others in the street was not of concern to Cadere, however. As he explained to Morris in a 1976 interview, “My work is the situation of my work in the art world. I am only interested in the art world because the work in the street is
always the same. In the street there is no development because people in the
street react in the same way today as they did six years ago and as they would
react twenty years into the future.” The primary reaction that he sought,
rather, came from the specialist audience that was primed to understand the
critique he was making of the power of the art world. This critique depended
on the public and its spaces in order to provide an outside that could serve as a
point of contrast, a space of independence.

By traversing the frontiers of the art world, crossing between public and
private spaces while playing the role of the uninvited guest, Cadere created an
“insider/outsider” position Agalides described as “an index of crisis.” In Ro-
mania the crisis was the “totalitarian paradox,” in which novelty is required to
institute a totalitarian government and yet it is prohibited by the governments
it creates. At the same time that the government attempts to encompass the
whole of society, there are still the outside positions, such as those that figures
like Cadere occupy in secret as members of the former bourgeois class forced
to pose as workers among the proletariat. Citing Giorgio Agamben, Agalides
likens Cadere’s position to that of living in a state of exception, subject to “the
legal form of what cannot have legal form.” Once in Paris, his status did not
stabilize; rather, onto this “crisis” was added his status as a “displaced person,”
a social position that he transformed into a strategy of institutional critique.

Figure 3.22. André Cadere’s graffiti intervening in writing in support of the Pleven Law, rue
Hervé Bize. Provided by Bernard Marcelis.
Taking up this interpretive motif, Jean-Pierre Criqui argued that Cadere’s new “place was that of a man who has no place, who infiltrates the interior in order to embody the exterior.” In so doing, he invented a position of perpetual negotiation for himself rather than assimilating into the system as it existed. This work of identifying, crossing, questioning, repurposing institutional and cultural boundaries is the political as Claude Lefort defines it, as practiced by an artist for whom negotiating boundaries was a perpetual imposed way of life.

Regarding his own position as a Romanian in the Western art world and society more generally, Cadere told Morris, “From my position there is nothing to lose. A Marxist position, like the quotation from Marx ‘The proletariat has nothing to lose but its chains.’ I feel myself to be in this position.” Several minutes later, he evoked the Cold War dialectic by locating America at the opposite end of the economic spectrum. “For American artists,” he said, “the questions of art are very much about economics. It is a question about American society; from a very realistic point of view it is all about money.” Money posed a problem for Cadere, since despite his claim to having nothing, he had experienced some success in the West that put him in the position of coping...
with the autonomy provided by the bourgeois art market. As he explained to Morris:

It is really the most difficult situation. It is more interesting than before but it is more difficult. It is more interesting because by giving me a little money and making me well known, the art world has at the same time given me a little power. Now it depends what I do with that power. It is a problem that I now have a little power that I did not have before. It is a gift. Before I had only the power of work, now the power of the work continues but also there is the power to be well known. At the same time as I say I am well known I also feel a kind of freedom.\textsuperscript{87}

His solution to this problem was to work within the apparatus of the bourgeois art market to expose its mechanisms.

While Cadere offered a critique of institutions’ structural factors in an attempt to move art beyond the walls of the economic powers that effectively modify the meaning of a work, his artistic process expressed those systems’ liberalist tendencies. The autonomy that he embraced did not ultimately challenge the foundations of art making and the institution as much as they did what Richard Rorty referred to as proposing new metaphors for how the system could function better. Indeed, as Foucault showed, it is useless to try and escape a system based on sovereignty through a liberal invocation of rights because doing so always ends up legitimizing that system’s basic values.\textsuperscript{88} Art institutions that depend on the concept of the autonomous artist will not be overthrown by an artist whose central preoccupation is independence from that system. As Bürger similarly comments, it is necessary to maintain a degree of convention within avant-garde critique if that critique is to be effective. If, by entering into life praxis, art creates too wide of a gap between itself and arts institutions such that “the praxis is aesthetic and art is practical,” then art loses the framework that makes its critical apparatus intelligible as such.\textsuperscript{89} In Cadere’s view, improving the system meant granting the artist more independence and more responsibility. The official spaces of art exhibition were both the subject of his work and a platform from which he often chose to speak. Polemics such as he engaged through \textit{Unlimited Painting} served his goal of transforming himself into, in his words, “a star.”\textsuperscript{90} Stardom was a tool that he hoped to use to serve his ideals. “I hope to integrate myself into the system,” he wrote, “a system that exists because painters make the machine work.”\textsuperscript{91} Displacing culpability from the museum to the artists themselves would make it possible for the latter to proliferate the narratives that determine art’s meaning.

Lotringer raised the complexity of Cadere’s relationship to these systems,
suggestions, “What must be a bit perplexing to people is that you outline what could be a systematic challenge, and then you leave off without giving it a direction. Don’t you think that’s rather absurd?” To this Cadere agreed: “Yes, it’s absurd enough. Precisely, there is no systematic challenge in it. I think that’s an interesting point.”

The display tactics that Cadere developed are consistent in their spatial challenges to institutional authority, yet this lack of direction that Lotringer identifies is an essential aspect of what could be called his antitotalitarian stance. While Bürger cites ambiguity as a shortcoming of the neo-avant-garde, whose work may be interpreted as either celebration or critique of reified consciousness (consumer culture, for example), the openness of an unresolved challenge, such as Cadere proposed with “establishing disorder” (discussed in the introduction to this book), offered no answers other than the dissolution of the restrictions that are imposed by systems of order. To return to Foucault’s distinction between resemblance and similitude, they are neither based on nor do they produce solutions that could function as models of a better system. The comparisons that his interventions invite among miscellaneous spaces challenge conventional determinations about incongruities. The effect is a suspension of the dialectic between the inside and outside of the art institutional system in which the resolution is left open to those who would take it upon themselves to determine the next step.

Traversing the boundaries that separate art institutions from the rest of the city, Cadere alternatively positioned himself as an anonymous figure in the crowd, an individual artist seeking to advance his career, and a perambulating force of institutional authority. The “new metaphors” that he offered to the system, however, involved a ceaseless pursuit of autonomy through which he operated on the presumption of working within an ideal liberal society in which every individual was free to participate equally, regardless of predisposition to the conventions of artistic exhibition. In recent years, the members of GRAV had attempted to make art available to everyone by replacing specialized knowledge with the viewer’s pure experience of the physical object, and it is likely that Cadere himself was influenced by such motivations as he began producing Op paintings when he first moved to Paris. In backing away from the specifics of perceptual experience to take a wider view of the structural system, however, he adopted an approach that questioned the preconditions of such perceptual experiences. Like the GRAV, he deemphasized the intention of the artist (as the one who might choose anything) in order to emphasize the object itself (as something that is visible). Yet he also reduced the importance that the individual viewer’s experience plays in accessing the object, and instead focused on accessibility at the institutional level, and his interest in ac-
cess was primarily that of the artist to an audience, rather than of the audience to a new way of experiencing art. By providing equal access to its visibility, the work highlighted the fact that art’s most basic requirement of being “seen” is always determined by those who control interpretation.

Cadere rebuffed the reader, however, in denying his or her access to interpretation. In doing so, he indicated that the death of the privileged position of artistic authorship would not necessarily occasion the birth of an exceptional status for the reader/viewer. Instead, he attempted to cancel any potential for a fixed meaning to be placed on the work. A mailing that Biard circulated for him around the time of the Unlimited Painting exhibition expressed the resistance that is constitutive of his work: “The paper on which this text is printed is to be thrown away, the text itself forgotten. Rather, what remains is that you have read the text, seen the paper. This brings you nothing, and in no way depends on you, this marks the limit of your power.” The statement expressed the independent will that Cadere attempted to actualize through his exhibition strategies. Far from absolutely rejecting interpretation, however, he recognized all interpretive power as being equally relatively valid. As he explained, “Each person is defined by his or her manner of reacting. Rolling pin, fishing rod, erotic object, etc. These are words that in the first place define the person expressing them. What is important in this work is the fact that it is exhibited where it is seen.” By making the work’s mere presence the condition of its exhibition, Cadere was able to cut out the middle man, exposing his work anywhere and everywhere: markets, pubs, basketball courts, sidewalk dumpsters, as well as museum exhibitions, and group and solo gallery shows—some of which with the consent of the institution, even. The meaning that viewers found in the work was incidental to Cadere’s ambitions for it.

Amid the widespread rejection of political representation and the promotion of direct democracy in the years after 1968, Cadere’s insistence on the presence of the object had less to do with its aura than with its ability to create situations that reflected critically back on their organizational structures and assumptions. Downplaying interpretation avoided the risk of creating a delimited consensus. Instead, his rejection both of his own authority as artist and of the interpretive authority of the viewer created a situation for the art object that reproduced the open place of representation that Lefort argued is at the heart of democracy. Unlike Buren, who sought to awaken a lazy audience by confronting it with a sublime experience of isolation before a work devoid of meaning, the ways in which Cadere denied interpretive footholds were consistently social, as he organized exhibitions around debates, staged them in public squares and markets, positioned the work as a site of conflict that would
generate discussion between interested parties, and was himself nearly always on hand to discuss the work as he carried it from place to place.

When an interviewer accused Cadere of violating an unsuspecting public by accosting them in the streets with his work, however, he turned the judgment around, countering, “Just the existence of the museums and galleries is an assault . . . . One can insult me, throw me from the doors of the museum, sequester my work: in this way one proves without ambiguity that ‘Beauty, Art’ are imposed with the police. . . . Of course from the point of view of power I deceive. But as I am saying, the rules of the game are not to be respected.”

Cadere chafes the Establishment at the same time that this goal should be understood as fundamentally consistent with arts institutions’ dependence on the role of the free artist following his or her instincts, visions, or research experiments, however they might be described. As Lauf notes, Cadere’s actions caused him to be “barely tolerated by much of the system he unabashedly tried to subvert”—his encounters with Claura and Denizot, as well as with Buren and Andre are evidence of this—yet at the same time, he found champions among those, such as Biard and Spillemaeckers, who themselves were attempting to create institutions that would function as establishments of disorder.
Cadere made his appeal to stardom on the basis of a group much larger than himself, as his art sought to incorporate the larger society of artists seeking representation, and of everyday people whom he addressed in the spaces where consciousness as a public forms, whether in museums, in pubs, or on the street. The ceding of identity, however, is ambivalent. The everyday escapes, for better or for worse. Writing a year after the May Movement, Blanchot described the actions of the government as it attempted to re-domesticate the man in the street, who had become emboldened by May, by asphyxiating politics. Plainclothes police officers surveyed the cinemas, cafés, and museums. The state carried out random searches and arrests and prevented groups from gathering in public spaces. If falling under the eye of such oppressive surveillance had become unavoidable in the aftermath of ’68, then transforming oneself into a suspicious character on the street or being uninvited at an exhibition was a subtly effective rejoinder.

Cadere’s strategy for weakening the exclusive control that art institutions exercised over the showing of artworks engaged a constant dialoging between the space of the street and that of the institution in a one-man effort to continue what many have identified as perhaps May’s most defining accomplish-
ment, that is, the toppling of sociological boundaries that separate students, workers, and intellectuals, or, in this case, the artist and the public. Whereas in 1968 this might have been a strategy for revolutionary change, by the mid-1970s the same process was akin to satisfying the precondition for a normal, functioning democracy. Indeed, Cadere’s art practice took part in a movement of institutional critique whose practitioners moved forward with 1968’s reaction against André Malraux’s attempts to mobilize high art for the dissemination of a universal culture that would promote aesthetic sensitivity and civic commitment through spontaneous revelation. Rather than rejecting the universalizing project of museums as tastemakers for the state in the promotion of the particular free expression of artists beyond the museum, Cadere emphasized both sides of the equation such that he highlighted the dialectic in which neither position can exist without the other while refusing to settle easily into a stable exhibition routine.

Just as his international recognition was gaining momentum, the artist was diagnosed with the cancer that would take his life in August 1978. During his final weeks in the hospital, he held steady to his work, writing a series of final notes to Yvon Lambert and taking short walks with a small bar beyond the hospital’s confines. Photos from his last summer show a gaunt man, unwavering in his commitment, seemingly proving his unlimited painting argument by showing that the critique in his work exceeded questions of institutionality. The everyday life in which his work found its ultimate relevance extended even into everyday experiences of dying. Although the bars themselves were not the work, the institutionalization of them as they were collected by individuals and museums constitutes an essential aspect of Cadere’s broader practice, as he sought recognition among the community to whom they were primarily intelligible. Although Cadere participated in the period’s critique of the Centre Pompidou, notably in his *établir le désordre* performance, which opens this book, his attitude toward that institution was typically ambivalent. As Marcelis recounts, before the museum opened, it officially communicated its esteem for his practice not only by acquiring a work, but by commissioning six bars of notable size that entered its collection before the museum opened. Incorporated into the most significant collection of modern and contemporary art in France, these bars stand as a monument to Cadere’s ambitions and success, and yet the bars themselves continue to exceed the museum’s ability to contain them, since a conventional inert display can only ever partially communicate their significance. By creating work that could both support and subvert the intended functioning of the museum, Cadere invented new metaphors to retool the machine.