

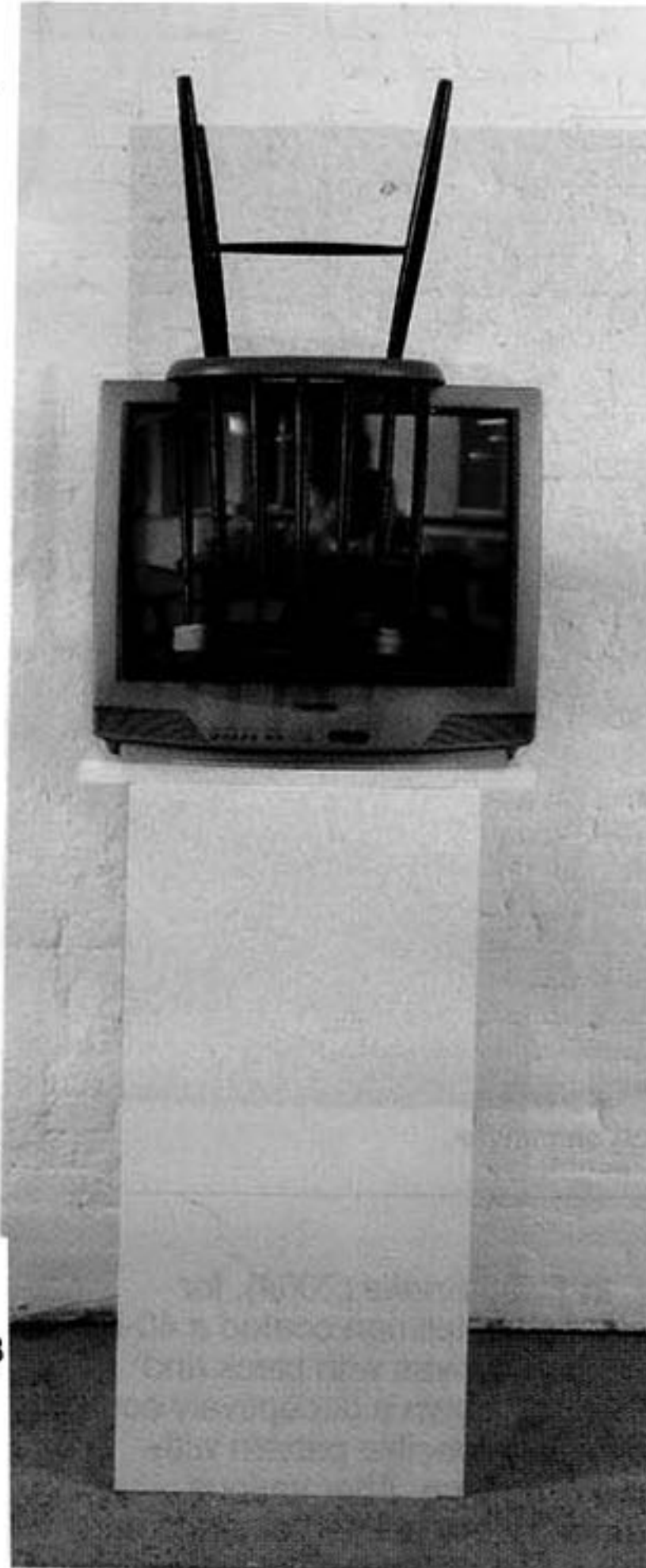
### Marcel Odenbach at Anton Kern

In Marcel Odenbach's show of early black-and-white videos and more recent work, *Die ewig schaffenden Hände oder Für alle Kunsthistoriker* (The

Eternally Creative Hands or For All Art Historians, 1976-77, 4 minutes) offers a parody of a faceless subject, anxious and insecure. Truncated by the camera's static gaze, a seated man fidgets nervously. At length, he defensively presses his thighs together and grooms his fingernails. A correlation is implied between the cathexis of this seated figure and the chair on which the monitor rested in the gallery. This simple work introduced the curatorial device of "Seated Videos 1977-1997," the Cologne-based artist's seventh solo show in New York and his fourth at Kern.

Scrutinizing his own practice, Odenbach's *Der Konsum meiner eigenen Kritik* (The Consumption of My Own Critique, 1977-78, 32 minutes, 7 seconds) finds the artist seated at a table laden with food, eating while listening to a voiceover. He rises, seems to change a radio station, sits, reads, smokes, sets aside a newspaper. This monitor is on a pedestal and is caged by the spindles of an inverted wooden chair. *Gespräch zwischen Ost und West* (Conversation Between East and West, 1978, 3 minutes, 37 seconds) is a futile dialogue staged by Odenbach and a colleague, the late Hungarian filmmaker Gábor Bódy, during the time of a still-divided Germany and suppression of dissent in Hungary. Seated side by side at a table, they turn to each other and attempt to speak. Their lips produce only bubbles of saliva.

In more recent works, Odenbach observes the enduring presence of racial prejudice, political turbulence, violence, and conspicuous consumption in modern cultures through sampling vintage television commercials, newsreel footage and sometimes-recognizable film segments that include works by Brian De Palma and Alfred Hitchcock. A voice absurd for its lack of sincerity repeats, "You are welcome" as the camera tours the inverted landscape of a city. In sequences that follow, there are passages of violence against blacks, footage of Nazis on parade, protesters, a pan along the Berlin Wall, riots, a



Marcel Odenbach: *The Consumption of My Own Critique*, 1977-78, DVD, monitor, pedestal, chair, approx. 32 minutes; at Anton Kern.

basketball game. The audio segues from flutes to drums to the sounds of a city. Germans don whiteface for Carnival, while urban African blacks paint their faces white in rites of passage. *Als könnte es auch mir an den Kragen gehen (Mord Band)* (As if they were going to get me [Murder Gang], 1983, 42 minutes, 17 seconds, black and white and color) included pillows and a carpeted platform to ease the viewer through the horror of Angie Dickinson's murder in *Dressed to Kill*. To drive such points home, following a swiftly moving stream of credits, Odenbach concludes with a still moment: Goya's *Third of May, 1808*. —Edward Lettingwell