

1968: A Global Perspective

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Situationist Poetry: Revolutionary Practice in Language and the Textual Works of Jenny Holzer

The subversive textual art of contemporary artist, Jenny Holzer, plays on the incongruous juxtaposition of the private and public spheres of life, contesting the alienation of the individual from society through the capitalist production of desire. Her work echoes the 1967 warning of Guy Debord within Thesis 8 in *Society of the Spectacle*: "In a world that really has been turned on its head, truth is a moment of falsehood" .

The Situationists would come to prominence during the May-June events in 1968 in Paris, France. "Only the truth is revolutionary," was one of the many graffiti-statements used by the Situationists in 1968 during the student rebellion. The Situationists declared that "the problem of language is at the heart of all the struggles between the forces striving to abolish the present alienation and those striving to maintain it" . Language would thus become the site of class struggle , as the Situationists would attempt to reclaim and refashion it as a tool of power.

Within Debord's theory, the discussion of writing and the creation of "poetry" is crucial to Situationist revolutionary practice. Within this paper I will explore Debord's definition of poetry as a way to discuss the revolutionary potential within the contemporary textual works of Jenny Holzer.