

PROJECT SERIES:  
*MOVEABLE TYPE NO DOCUMENTA*



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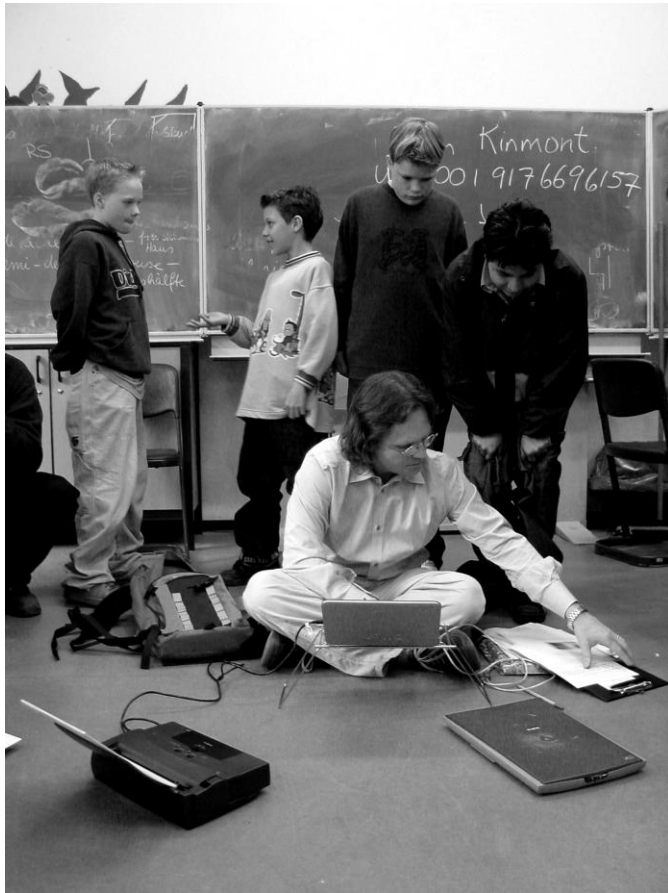
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## Introduction

The current publication includes several items relating to *Moveable Type No Documenta*.<sup>1</sup> Firstly it reprints the texts of the conversations I had with ten people in and around Kassel.<sup>2</sup> These conversations began with a discussion (usually in the participant's home, but including a store, church, and school) about what they found to be meaningful in their life and how that meaningfulness came and went. We then discussed if it was possible to understand that meaningfulness as art and should one understand it as art. After some time on the important difference between "can" and "should" in this context, the participant was then asked what was the difference between this meaningfulness and what they experienced in the museum.

These ten conversations were in German and English, were documented by myself and the translator through note-taking (I speak only some German), the notes were then compared, a summary text was written by myself and the participant (in German and English) which was then proofread and edited by the participant. Once finished, the text was printed and distributed in the neighborhood in which the conversation occurred. I spent one day with each participant and our printer's batteries determined the number of broadsides printed and distributed on that day.

During the conversations I explained some elements of my past work, how the participant could remain anonymous, and that they would be invited to the various openings of Documenta and receive a copy of the catalogue. I also discussed the precedents of Ian Wilson's conversation pieces in galleries and museums, Mel Bochner and Seth Siegelaub's work with publications as an exhibition space, and some general issues around art and everyday life from Constable to Theodore Dreiser to Rikrit Tiravanija.

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<sup>1</sup> Organized for Documenta XI, 8 June – 15 September, 2002, Kassel, Germany.

<sup>2</sup> None of the participants was from the art world and most had never been to Documenta (even though Kassel calls itself the "Documentastadt.")

I also tried to share with the participants what I saw as some of the implications in such a project. I begin my projects with the understanding that art is about paying attention and being aware of our active participation in the creation of meaning. Whether it is Turner departing from a historical subject to produce a painting about luminosity or scenes of labor, or Laurie Parsons laying a found pile of garbage into a gallery, both use an art discourse to redirect our attention and help us to see how we understand the object of art. This redirection from what is expected to something new forces us to also consider issues of value: do we value it? Why is it made? Who made it? And to whom is it of value?

Once the focus can leave the expected and our attention can move to an effort to understand the work, and to understand understanding itself, then the field of what can be art opens up tremendously, expanding to include all realms of life. This expansion also forces us to focus upon the decisions we make in this open field. In the case of *Moveable Type No Documenta*, my choice was to redirect our attention to the meanings being generated in and around Kassel. It was to speak with people about the meaningfulness in their lives, to watch my and their valuing of our discussion come and go, to listen to our conversation as we tried to include new areas of meaningfulness in the idea of art, and to also see the areas where the idea of art failed.

The project was to also say, if we can accept Ian Wilson's idea of conversation as art and the conversations with people in and around Kassel as artworks, then perhaps we can recognize meaningfulness in places not usually under the purview of art. Perhaps the meaningfulness of each participant can be exchanged and shared. Perhaps by approaching art as an understanding of understanding and the meaningfulness found and shared in life, we can ask ourselves about the purpose of art, about the purpose of exhibitions such as Documenta. If we can see art as about the creation of meaning, why do we have Documenta? Isn't it happening already, always, in and around Kassel? But then, perhaps, the exhibition is simply an apparatus for our attention, a means to see and listen, and is there as a necessary support due to our own weakness in paying attention in life. Perhaps the second part of my project's title, "No Documenta," was but an ideal to life.

Ben Kinmont



Art is communication with the other, but with understanding. It is *Lebenskunst*, where you know how to live a full life with what you have. When in the museum you experience a summary of life, aspects of life; at home you have the art but with the *zwischentöne* (literally, “the sounds in between”). In conversation at a participant’s home.

Kunst ist Kommunikation mit dem Anderen, aber mit dem Verstehen des Anderen. Es handelt sich um Lebenskunst, bei der du weißt, wie du ein erfülltes Leben lebst mit dem, was du hast. Im Museum erlebst du eine Zusammenfassung des Lebens, Aspekte des Lebens, zu Hause hast du die Kunst mit allen Zwischentönen. Aus dem Gespräch mit einer Teilnehmerin in ihrem Haus.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Hunsrückstrasse, Kassel,  
3 April 2002.

The most meaningful thing to me is that there are some things which cannot be explained and you must open your mind to them. You must choose to open your mind before nature forces you to. If you decide to open your mind then it is art. If nature forces you to then it is not. When in a museum, you can say always say no to the piece and just move on; but in life if you ignore it you die. From a participant in his shop.

Die bedeutsamste Sache für mich ist, dass es einige Dinge gibt, die nicht zu erklären sind und du musst deinen Geist dafür öffnen. Du musst dich entscheiden, deinen Geist zu öffnen, bevor die Natur dich dazu zwingt. Wenn du dich entscheidest, deinen Geist zu öffnen, dann ist das Kunst. Wenn die Natur dich dazu zwingt, dann nicht. Im Museum kannst du dich immer entscheiden, nein zu einem Kunststück zu sagen und einfach weitergehen; aber wenn du es im Leben ignorierst, dann stirbst du. Aus dem Gespräch mit einem Teilnehmer in seinem Geschäft.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse, Kassel,  
4 April 2002.

My break-up with my partner is the most meaningful thing for me right now, it is my focus. But what is meaningful in life is always changing to what is the most urgent. This relationship and the break-up was art, but not during the break-up. Then I couldn't see it as art, only with hindsight. I believe that it was art because it could be interpreted in many different ways and it was moving, emotional. In the museum you can decide how close to be to the art. But in life you can't control the art. From a conversation with a participant in a cafe.

Die Trennung von meiner Partnerin ist im Moment am bedeutsamsten für mich, mein Fokus ist darauf gerichtet. Aber was einem bedeutsam erscheint, verändert sich mit jeder aktuellen Lebensphase. Diese Beziehung und die Trennung war Kunst, aber nicht während der Trennung. Da konnte ich es nicht als Kunst betrachten, nur im Rückblick. Ich glaube, dass es Kunst war, denn es konnte auf sehr viele verschiedene Arten interpretiert werden und es war emotional bewegend. Im Museum kannst du entscheiden, wie nahe du der Kunst sein willst. Aber im Leben kannst du die Kunst nicht kontrollieren. Aus dem Gespräch mit einem Teilnehmer In einem Cafe.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Universität Kassel, Restaurant "Pavillion", Kassel,  
5 April 2002.

The most important thing in my life is my children and, in so far as they are part of nature, they can be considered art. But I don't think of them that way and to present them as art in the museum is idiotic. Both are created but one is of nature and one is artificial. In conversation with a participant in her home.

Die wichtigste Sache in meinem Leben ist meine Kinder und insofern sie ein Teil der Natur sind, können sie als Kunst betrachtet werden. Aber ich denke über sie nicht in dieser Weise und sie als Kunst im Museum zu präsentieren ist idiotisch. Beides sind Schöpfungen, aber das Eine ist eine Schöpfung der Natur und das Andere ist künstlich. Aus dem Gespräch mit einer Teilnehmerin in ihrer Wohnung.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Langenbeckstrasse, Kassel,  
6 April 2002.

I am not an artist with my family but the process of coming together with my children is the most important thing to me, and this process between us could be understood as art. In this way, I suppose, even my children are *lebenskünstler*. But this is not like the art of a museum. The art of a museum is an end product and this is a process. In conversation with a participant in his home.

Bei meiner Familie bin ich kein Künstler, aber der Prozess des Zusammenkommens mit meinen Kindern ist die wichtigste Sache für mich und dieser Prozess zwischen uns könnte als Kunst verstanden werden. So, nehme ich an, sind sogar meine Kinder Lebenskünstler. Aber das ist nicht wie die Kunst im Museum. Die Kunst im Museum ist ein Endprodukt und dieses ist ein Prozess. Aus dem Gespräch mit einem Teilnehmer in seiner Wohnung.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
riedrich-Ebert-Strasse, Kassel,  
7 April 2002.

It is most important to me that there is something greater than myself, something which we know through trust. Some look for this deeper meaning in the church whereas others (probably more) now go to the museum. However, you cannot say that one *should* understand this trust as art; but you can understand this trust and this way of life as art. From a conversation with a participant in his church.

Am wichtigsten für mich ist, dass es etwas gibt, das grösser ist als ich selbst, etwas, worauf wir vertrauen. Einige suchen nach diesem tieferen Sinn in der Kirche, wohingegen andere (wahrscheinlich mehr) mittlerweile ins Museum gehen. Man *muss* dieses Vertrauen jedoch nicht als Kunst verstehen; aber man kann dieses Vertrauen und die entsprechende Lebensart als Kunst verstehen. Aus dem Gespräch mit einem Teilnehmer in seiner Kirche.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Friedenskirche, Kassel,  
8 April 2002.

The most important thing for me in my life was that I had the possibility to go to university. That time gave me knowledge and confidence and as it altered my behavior it had meaningful consequences on my family and work life. At the time, it also appeared to me as art because I believed, and still do, that experiences which have consequences and help you to live your life should be considered art. I am saying this as someone who is not in the art business and doesn't have to worry about economic profit from my art. From a conversation with a participant in her office.

Die wichtigste Sache in meinem Leben ist, dass ich die Möglichkeit hatte, ein Universitätsstudium zu absolvieren. In dieser Zeit habe ich Wissen und Selbstvertrauen erworben; dies änderte mein Verhalten und hatte damit bedeutsame Auswirkungen auf meine Familie und mein Arbeitsleben. Zu dieser Zeit erschien es mir auch als Kunst, denn ich glaubte und glaube immer noch, dass Erfahrungen, die Auswirkungen haben und dir helfen, dein Leben zu leben, als Kunst angesehen werden sollten. Ich sage das als eine, die nicht im Kunstgeschäft tätig ist und sich nicht um den wirtschaftlichen Profit meiner Kunst sorgen muss. Aus dem Gespräch mit einer Teilnehmerin in ihrem Büro.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Rathaus, Kassel,  
9 April 2002.

I stopped working as a teacher three years ago to stay home with my children. They are the most important thing to me. I found from being a teacher and watching other families, that children need considerable time and attention from their parents, not only material things. I am staying home to give them this time and attention. It is my *Lebenskunst* to stay open to the ideas, activities, and developments of my children, to enjoy watching their growth and to accompany them. In conversation at a participant's home.

Vor drei Jahren habe ich aufgehört, als Lehrerin zu arbeiten, um zu Hause bei meinen Kindern zu bleiben. Sie sind für mich die wichtigste Sache. Aufgrund meiner Erfahrungen als Lehrerin und durch das Beobachten anderer Familien habe ich herausgefunden, dass Kinder viel Zeit und Zuwendung durch ihre Eltern brauchen, nicht nur materielle Dinge. Ich bleibe zu Hause, um ihnen diese Zeit und Zuwendung zukommen zu lassen. Meine *Lebenskunst* ist, für die Ideen, Taten und Entwicklungen der Kinder offen zu bleiben, mich an ihrem Wachstum zu erfreuen und sie zu begleiten. Aus dem Gespräch mit einer Teilnehmerin in ihrem Haus.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Ludwig-Erhard-Strasse, Kassel,  
9 April 2002.

My work as an anesthesiologist is always meaningful to me. This responsibility of taking care of others is difficult at times, but when it turns out well I am very proud of what I do. One cannot think of this as art, however. Art is concerned with aesthetics and fantasy whereas anaesthesia is applied natural science. In my job I have to act; in the museum I am a consumer of what is offered. From a conversation with Dr. Jörg Schuck in his house.

Meine Arbeit als Anästhesist ist für mich immer bedeutsam. Diese Verantwortung die man trägt, wenn man sich um andere Menschen kümmert, ist manchmal schwierig, aber wenn es gut geht, dann bin ich immer stolz darauf, was ich mache. Man kann das jedoch nicht als Kunst verstehen. Kunst befasst sich mit Ästhetik und Phantasie, wohingegen Anästhesie angewandte Naturwissenschaft ist. In meinem Beruf muss ich handeln; im Museum konsumiere ich das, was angeboten wird. Aus dem Gespräch mit Dr. Jörg Schuck in seinem Haus.

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Am Gewende, Heckershausen,  
10 April 2002.

The most important thing to us is our family and friends; trust; being honest with yourself and others; and feeling safe. In life we are all artists in how we present ourselves and how we behave with others. For example, with our families it takes more art than with our friends because we can't choose our families. But in our behavior it is important to remember that you cannot be more than you are, but you can improve, so that you can grow.

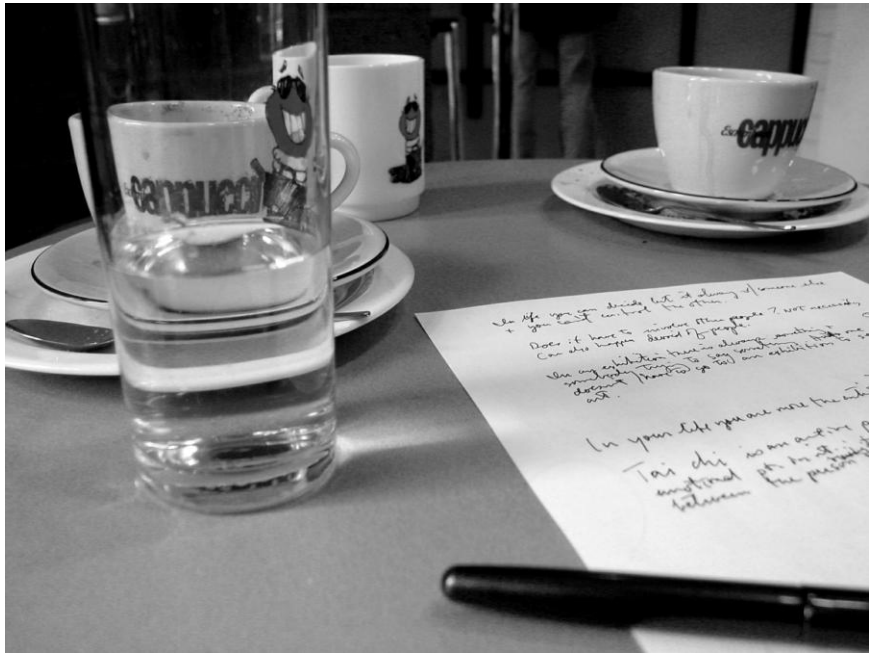
When visiting the museum, the special thing that is your life feels boring. But it is possible to connect your life with what you saw in the museum after you leave. In conversation with students in Jutta Krug's class IIIb (ages 12-14).

Die wichtigste Sache für uns ist unsere Familie und Freunde; Vertrauen; ehrlich mit uns selbst und anderen zu sein; und sich sicher zu fühlen. Im Leben sind wir alle Künstler, so wie wir uns präsentieren und wie wir mit anderen umgehen. So braucht es zum Beispiel mehr Kunst im Umgang mit unserer Familie, als mit unseren Freunden, weil wir uns unsere Familien nicht aussuchen können. Aber bei unserem Verhalten ist es wichtig, sich daran zu erinnern, dass man sich nicht grösser machen kann, als man ist, aber man kann sich verbessern, so dass man wachsen kann.

Wenn du das Museum besuchst, erscheint dir das Besondere, das dein Leben ist, langweilig. Aber nachdem du das Museum verlassen hast, ist es möglich, eine Verbindung zwischen deinem Leben und dem, was du dort gesehen hast, herzustellen. Aus dem Gespräch mit Jutta Krug's Schülern der Klasse IIIb (12-14 Jahre alt).

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Moveable type no documenta. Printed by the Antinomian Press,  
Reformschule, Kassel,  
11 April 2002



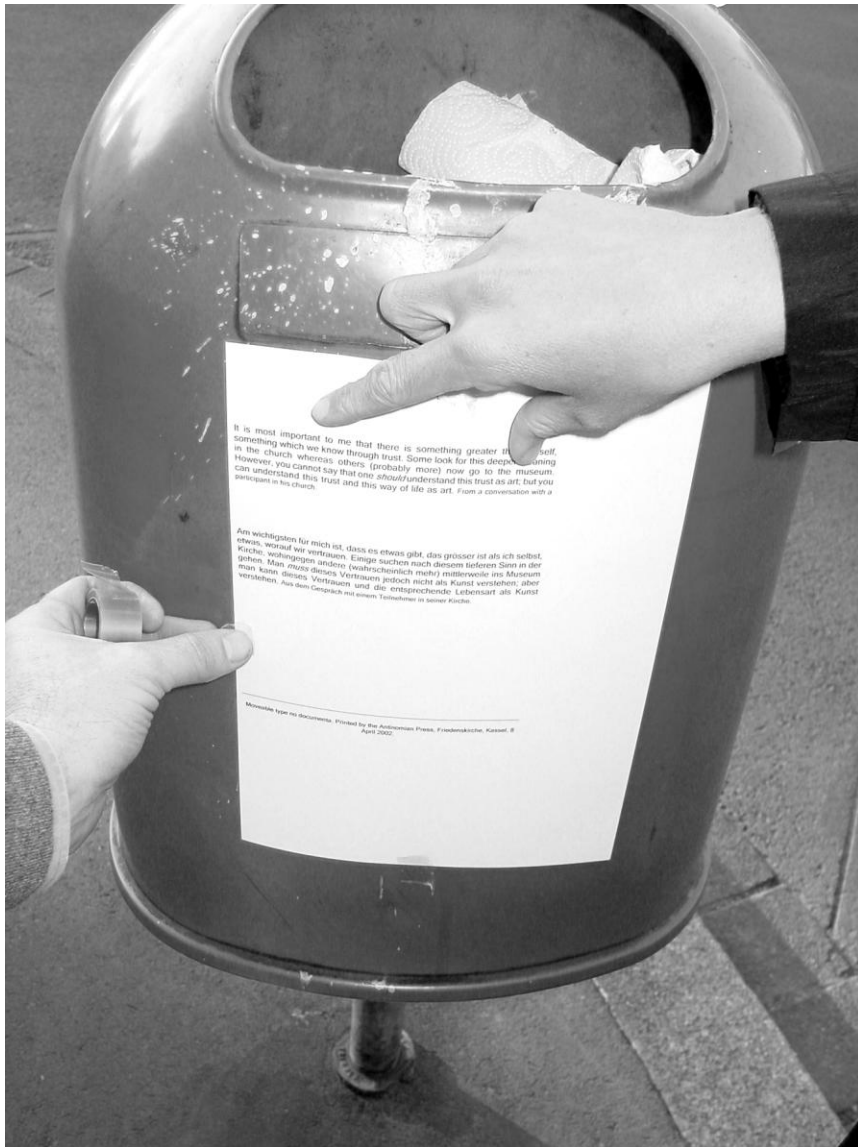
do you decide but it always of course also  
+ you can't avoid the other  
Does it have to involve the people? we usually  
Can also happen around by people  
the way which they're always making  
you might think to you sometimes they're  
different (read it too) an exhibition to  
not.

In your life you are now the artist  
Tas this is an artist's  
emotional it is a  
between the past















## Appendix A

In the early 1450s Johannes Gutenberg invents moveable type and by 1453 begins printing his 42 line Bible in Mainz.

Due to the English Civil War, from 1640-1660, there is a dramatic growth in publishing by extreme Protestant and political groups; the printing press has become a relatively cheap and portable piece of equipment giving voice to “masterless men” and contributing to the decentralization of government. By the time censorship is resumed with the restoration of Charles II, the control of government has shifted away from a divine King and to an elected Parliament.

In December 1966, Mel Bochner uses the New York School of Visual Arts’ first Xerox machine to create *Working Drawings*, a bound series of photocopies of receipts, sketches, and notes from various artists presented as an exhibition. Later, in early 1969, Seth Siegelaub produces *March 1-31, 1969*, an offset publication that is mailed around the world as an exhibition in publication format only. Both projects blur the distinction between artist and curator and contribute to a decentralization of the museum and gallery.

By the year 2000, 54 million households in the United States are able to self-publish through the use of a computer and printer.



## Appendix B

What follows is the original proposal given to Okwui Enwezor and drafted on 11 November 2001.

Moveable type or No Documenta  
A project proposal for Documenta11

I will visit homes, community organizations, and businesses to ask people whether their activities could (and should) be thought of as art.

The structure of the project will be as follows: I will arrive and talk with the participants about what it is they are doing and take some digital photographs. The conversation will be recorded. Next, I will transcribe portions of the discussion and paste-in the images to make a publication. With the time remaining in the day, I will then print out copies of the publication and distribute them in and around the neighborhood where the activity took place. The length of the publication and the number of copies printed will depend upon the amount of time available after the discussion. One day will be devoted to each person/place visited; I propose to visit ten sites.

In an historical context, *Moveable type* refers to Johannes Gutenberg and his invention of re-usable pieces of type in printing. This important technological development opened up religious debate and provided a new voice for vernacular languages and popular concerns. Before this time the transmission of texts and their content were for the most part controlled by the centralized power of the Church.

*Moveable type* also refers to the way in which current technology has localized printing to an individual level enabling anyone to become his or her own publisher. Recent developments in photocopy machines, computers, and printers have brought about this revolution on a level comparable to Gutenberg's own transformation of print in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. This significance was felt early on within the art world in the form of Mel Bochner's *Working Drawings* show (Dec. 1966), a bound series of photocopies of receipts, sketches and notes from various artists. *Working Drawings*, along with Siegelau's *March 1-31, 1969*, paralleled these

technological developments and gave birth to the exhibition in publication format.

Lastly, *Moveable type* refers to my own activity in Kassel and the history of project art. Project art is characterized by being outside of the museum or centralized power construct and usually functions without a single point of meaning or a primary object. In this particular case, *Moveable type* will investigate the question of whether value can be generated in a non-art context through an art discourse. Equally, the non-art site will reflect upon the art and history of Documenta through the project's comparison of people's activities in Kassel with those on display every five years within Museum Fridericianum.

#### NOTES:

I would propose that the interactions and in situ publishing occur before the 8 June 2002 opening of "Documenta\_Platform 5."

For the exhibition space I would display my portable publishing apparatus (computer, printer, digital camera, tape recorder, backpack, small rug, paper, stapler, etc.) set up on the floor with copies of each of the original publications for visitors to the exhibition to take away with them (to be replenished during the exhibition).

#### COSTS:

A language course and materials to be purchased (lap top computer and rechargeable batteries; printer and rechargeable batteries; digital camera; tape recorder; stapler; paper; ink cartridges for the printer; rug; backpack; embroidered project labels): Approximately \$7500.00

#### Unknown costs:

Maybe three or four trips to Kassel (to see the city for the first time and perhaps start getting ideas about who and where to visit; to conduct the project; & to install the space and be there for the opening). A place to stay and a per diem for food, etc. while I'm in Kassel.



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