

A photograph of a gallery space. In the foreground, a large, voluminous white dress is displayed on a mannequin, its long, flowing skirt cascading down. The floor is made of light-colored wood and is covered with numerous rolls of white paper, some of which are unrolled and spread out. In the background, there are white walls, a white pedestal, and a doorway. The lighting is bright and even.

sociology of the arts

Art and the Challenge of Markets Volume 2

From Commodification of Art to Artistic
Critiques of Capitalism

EDITED BY
VICTORIA D. ALEXANDER,
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Sociology of the Arts

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Victoria D. Alexander • Samuli Hägg
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Editors

Art and the Challenge of Markets Volume 2

From Commodification of Art to
Artistic Critiques of Capitalism

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Preface

The volume at hand, *Art and the Challenge of Markets: From Commodification of Art to Artistic Critiques of Capitalism*, is a continuation of the volume *Art and the Challenge of Markets: National Cultural Politics and the Challenges of Marketization and Globalization*. It forms the second volume of a book in two volumes. Although it can be read on its own, we conceived of the two volumes as companions that link together to form a greater whole.

The first volume of *Art and the Challenge of Markets* considers the development of cultural policies and art worlds in Western countries from the 1980s and 1990s to the present, after which it describes the structure and functioning of international and transnational art worlds. The contributions also address questions such as the extent to which individual countries have preserved their traditional cultural hegemony against the current pressure of globalization. This second volume deals with contemporary cultural politics and art worlds from a slightly different point of view. Here, the chapters are more theoretical and art-philosophical in nature. These contributions focus on several topical questions and themes that arise from the market-based turn in society, which has so profoundly influenced art worlds.

A key theme is the fate of art's autonomy. In Western countries, the degree of autonomy has doubtless decreased during recent decades. The notion of autonomy in the arts developed in the late eighteenth century,

and this ideal subsequently provided the basis for the functioning of modern Western artistic culture. In the West, the sphere of art attained a relatively autonomous position, particularly with respect to political and religious authorities, as well as freedom from the practices and principles of modern (industrial) capitalism. The situation with respect to artistic autonomy outside the Western world was different, for in non-Western civilizations, traditional means of livelihood and ways of production were preserved often up to the nineteenth or into the twentieth century, even while these civilizations found a certain place in the modern capitalist world system. Therefore, the sphere of art in non-Western civilizations was usually more closely connected to other aspects of social and cultural life, and these civilizations may have never experienced a long tradition of relatively autonomous art, in the Western sense. And conversely, it is precisely in the Western world where the contrast between art's traditionally wide autonomy and the current situation strikes many observers as notable, astonishing, or shocking.

Western and non-Western countries approach the current situation from different historical perspectives. What they have in common, however, is the ubiquitous influence of capitalism. To date, most of the former "underdeveloped countries" have undergone an internal process of capitalization, bringing them closer to the economic systems of Western countries. Nearly all nations are today, in a very concrete sense, participants in the capitalist world order. Questions concerning contemporary capitalism and its relationship with art are, therefore, universal in today's world. Our first volume shows how even in Western countries, different national art worlds and cultural policies do not approach these questions in a uniform way. This volume, in turn, shows that the rise of non-Western art worlds has, to a certain extent, changed transnational and global art worlds' structures and operations. It aims to consider these changes and to explore the position of non-Western countries in transnational and global art worlds, although, primarily, it concentrates on those art worlds' general or common properties.

Contemporary art does not merely reflect the capitalist economy and the rest of society, in a passive way. On the contrary, it is capable of reflecting *on* the contemporary world order and its own position and role in this order. In its reflexive capacity, art continues the legacy of society-

critical practice in new and fresh ways, and, at the same time, it elaborates on alternative ways of producing and mediating art. In challenging contemporary norms or power structures, however, critical art can end up as an object of political and juridical control.

The authors in this volume are mainly sociologists, but contributors are also philosophers, aestheticians, and scholars from cultural studies. Though these authors do not share a common theoretical or political background, all are interested in the contemporary market-based turn in society and its effects on, interactions with, or responses from art worlds.

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London, UK
June 9, 2017

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Part 1

Introduction

1

Capitalist Economy as a Precondition and Restraint of Modern and Contemporary Art Worlds

Erkki Sevänen

Introduction

During recent decades, several social and cultural theorists have thought that, from the 1980s and 1990s on, the societal–cultural developmental process has taken a new course. Accordingly, if modern (Western) civilization was characterized by the structural principle of *functional differentiation*, then the contemporary societal–cultural reality has, in part, turned into the opposite direction: the principle of *dedifferentiation* is, thereby, more typical of it than the principle of functional differentiation. Richard Münch (1991, 135–36, 172–74) points out that this process of dedifferentiation has been ongoing both at a global and at a national level. Although the modern world system had already emerged by the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as Immanuel Wallerstein

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and Niklas Luhmann have emphasized, for several centuries, it consisted of single empires and nation-states that were capable of controlling their boundaries relatively effectively; to be sure, a generalization such as this holds chiefly true only for Western states and other noncolonialized states. Today, this situation has, however, changed. On a world scale, single national societies have now become more and more open with each other, and within these single societies, different functional subsystems (economy, politics, law, science, art, education, religion, mass media) are now increasingly interlaced (see also Lash 1992, ix–xi, 5–11). Through this, the age of *classical* or *simple modernity* that lasted from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1970s has given way to the contemporary phase of the societal–cultural development.

The thought in question is not, however, the whole truth about the contemporary societal–cultural reality, for in a certain sense also, functional differentiation is still an ongoing element in this reality. Undoubtedly, national societies and their functional subsystems have lost a considerable part of their former sovereignty and distinctive hallmarks, but at the same time, there have emerged new kinds of global or transnational systems, for example, in the area of economy, politics, science, education, art, mass media and sports. This development has, actually, continued the process of system formation and functional differentiation. On the other hand, because most of these systems have evolved and strengthened in a close interaction with capitalist markets and economic goals, the concept of dedifferentiation is, to a certain extent, applicable to them as well. In this respect, both “dedifferentiation” and “differentiation” are necessary conceptual tools in descriptions of the contemporary world.

The contemporary phase has been conceptualized in several different ways. In particular, concepts such as *postmodernity*, *late modernity*, *reflexive modernity*, and *global modernity* have been utilized in social sciences and cultural studies. The volume at hands does not reflect on these concepts systematically, although this introductory chapter, as well as the concluding chapter at the end of the volume, takes them up and certain kindred concepts. Our starting point is the perception that the process of dedifferentiation has, first and foremost, occurred under the conditions of capitalist economy. This economic system has been powerful from the

1980s on, when leading Western countries began to realize neoliberalist politics that demanded that the entire society must follow rather similar principles of operation as the private enterprise sector has followed in capitalist economy. In this sense, Western societies have moved toward a market-based model of society, and after the collapse of the socialist world system in the early 1990s, a comparable process of marketization has, in part, been ongoing in the rest of the world as well. Today, questions concerning capitalism are, therefore, relevant across the world, even if different regions of the world have arrived at contemporary capitalism via different historical–societal developmental courses.

The process of dedifferentiation also concerns the contemporary system of art, with the result that since the 1980s and 1990s, this system has increasingly fused with capitalist economy. Today, there are, between these two systems, that is, the system of art and the system of economy, several common or overlapping areas. In Western art theory, the difference between the modern and the contemporary system of art has been seen as sharp, since in classical Western modernity, art obtained a *relatively autonomous position* in society. In contrast, the contemporary system of art possesses a low degree of autonomy with regard to economy and other subsystems, and today, the layer of relatively autonomous art forms a shrinking branch in the system of art. On the other hand, in the non-Western world, the shift from the previous to the contemporary sphere of art looks often different. For example, Japan was opened up to Western influences only in the mid-nineteenth century, and in China and (South) Korea, a similar process started still later, that is, in the twentieth century. Before the dates in question, these three societies lived a traditional feudal–agrarian life in which the sphere of art was closely associated with handicraft, social rituals, moral–practical self-education, and aristocratic ceremonies. In these societies, there did not emerge a widely accepted urge to elaborate on an idea of autonomous art. This idea has neither ever been rooted in China, for before the current situation, China was a communist country in which art and popular culture were subordinated to serve political–ideological goals defined by the party organization.

The next sections describe the birth of the modern Western system of art and its relatively autonomous position in society. After this, I consider

the shift from the modern to the contemporary system of art. These sub-chapters are based on the thought that the modern system of art would not have been possible without the spread of capitalist ways of action in society. Capitalist economy was once a necessary precondition for the emerging of a relatively autonomous sphere of art, but capitalism's subsequent development and its tendency to spread into all subareas of social life have increasingly questioned this autonomy. Depending on how we value this development, we can see it either as a threat or as an opportunity for the sphere of art. Or, if we think "dialectically," we can see it to include both threats and opportunities from the standpoint of the systems of art.

The Emergence and Establishment of Capitalist Ways of Action

Social sciences do not offer us a coherent picture of the birth of capitalist ways of action. For example, according to Max Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Economy and Society, 1921–22), capitalist ways of action were, to a certain extent, in use already in ancient civilizations, although they did not dominate, at that time, the production and distribution of goods, nor were they capable of releasing the sphere of art from its close connection to handicraft, religion, and social rituals (Weber 1956). In contrast, perhaps more often, social scientists used to date the birth of capitalist ways of action to the Middle Ages. In this alternative view, capitalist ways of action first emerged in Italy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the areas of trading and banking, and their maintainers were chiefly wealthy princes. As Fernand Braudel (1985a, b) has shown, these new sorts of economic phenomena and their subsequent development in Italy were part of a more general historical process in which a wide trading area, with Venice as its major center, took shape in the Mediterranean region by the late fourteenth century. Through this, the princes in question became economically and politically powerful, and gained a certain independence from the Catholic Church. Because they also began to act as generous patrons of art, this development released the sphere of art, in part, from the spiritual–ideological control practiced by the Catholic

Church and made possible the flourishing of the Italian Renaissance from the fourteenth century on. Both the birth and spread of capitalist ways of action and the breakdown of the spiritual–ideological monopoly of the Catholic Church were, thereby, important historical preconditions for the emerging of a relatively autonomous sphere of art.

In his well-known study, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur* (Social History of Art and Literature, 1953), Arnold Hauser states that, already in the Italian Renaissance, philosophers and artists worked on the idea of art's autonomy; to be clear, for them, “art” chiefly meant architecture, painting, and sculpture. Yet, from the late sixteenth century on, the Catholic Counter-Reformation abolished the relatively autonomous position of these three visual kinds of art for about three centuries, not only in Italy but also in Spain and several other Catholic countries (Hauser 1983, 352–55). On the other hand, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, French and English artists' spiritual–ideological freedom was wider. In France and England, the practice of the arts was closely connected to court life and to the aristocratic way of life. In addition, in France, in particular, the artists were forced to follow the goals that the absolutistic monarchy set for the arts, which brought a strong element of political–ideological control into the emerging new art life. For reasons such as these, the next time the idea of art's autonomy became central in art theory or aesthetic theory would only be in Immanuel Kant's philosophy, Friedrich Schiller's aesthetic writings, and German Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century.

Early capitalist ways of action in Italy stand for the prehistory of capitalism. The subsequent development of capitalism has been divided into four major phases in a manner that comes up in Table 1.1. At the beginning of the first phase, capitalist ways of action stood for a dawning economy inside the aristocratic estate society. A wider and deeper institutionalization of these ways of action took place in the course of the first phase, which lasted from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century. The first phase was also important in the sense that, in Europe, there emerged during its course several politically centralized and territorially large states that standardized the administration of law and taxation, as well as the treatment of people, within their territories. The power of these states exceeded the power of local authorities, and, in fact, the states

Table 1.1 Capitalism's historical development phases

-
1. *From the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century: the phase of original accumulation and the emergence of farming and trading capitalism.* The birth and formation of the modern world system took place in this phase. From the very begin, this system has been dominated by Western countries that have exploited other continents' human and natural resources. During the seventeenth century, England became the most powerful country in this world system. In this phase, the economic life in Europe was regulated by the states that practiced a mercantile economic policy
 2. *From the beginning of the nineteenth century to the 1920s and 1930s: the phase of classical liberal capitalism or laissez-faire capitalism.* At the same time, farming and trading capitalism gave way to industrial capitalism. After the First World War, the United States took the leading position in the world system
 3. *From the 1930s to the 1970s: the phase of organized capitalism and the expansive welfare state.* President F.D. Roosevelt's (1933–45) New Deal politics in the United States and Social Democratic governments in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in the 1930s were early manifestations of the welfare state politics. More widely, Western states began to realize it after the Second World War. In this phase, the states adopted an active role as the regulators of the rest of society
 4. *From the 1980s and 1990s onward: the shift to the neoliberal world order and contemporary global economy, which is dominated by finance capitalism.* At the same time, immaterial factors have become more and more central in economic value production. In this phase, the welfare state has, in part, transformed into the competitive state. Likewise, the states have lost a great deal of their capacity to control and regulate their own "national economy." In this sense, national economies have increasingly been interlaced with the global economy
-

Sources: Braudel (1985a, b), Lash and Urry (1987)

subordinated local authorities through their power. In the first instance, Portugal, Spain, France, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Switzerland, Austria, and Prussia belonged to these states. Modern or "rational" capitalism benefited from this situation, since it needed large market areas, unified administration of law, and legal norms that regulate economic activities and make the functioning of economy, as far as it is possible, more predictable. On the other hand, modern capitalism itself also accelerated the formation of wide states, because it created a structural pressure on the formation of states like these. Somewhat later, that is, from the late eighteenth century on, modern European nation-states, then, began to take shape on the basis of

these politically centralized and territorially wide states. In this long-term process of nation-building, the estate privileges were abolished and lower classes—or, the “mob”—as well as women were gradually formally accepted as the members and citizens of these nation-states.

By the late eighteenth century, capitalist ways of action achieved priority over traditional and premodern ways of economic action in Europe’s leading countries, above all, in England and the Netherlands. In Karl Marx’s (1974), Max Weber’s (2010), and Karl Polanyi’s (2001) sociological and economic–historical studies, a characteristic feature of capitalist economy is that entrepreneurs do not manufacture products for their own or personal use. Instead, capitalist activities are directed toward markets in which different goods are treated as commodities, that is, as products that can be bought or sold. In this respect, capitalism differs from a traditional economy, in which the role of markets was limited and the results of productive activities were, primarily, meant for producers and their possible masters’ own use. All of these classics also held that capitalism is deeply steered by the motive for profit-seeking: when selling their products on markets, capitalist entrepreneurs expect to receive considerably more monetary value or exchange value than the manufacturing of these products demanded from them. To be sure, as Weber pointed out, there was “sporadic” or contingent profit-seeking also in traditional society, but in modern capitalism, profit-seeking and surplus value production are systematic and based on the utilization of technology and science on a large scale.

For Marx, the first phase was, primarily, an era of original or primitive accumulation. During this long era, traditional independent workers, in particular peasants, were usually violently separated from the means of production (landowning, farming) by powerful landowners, who took these lands into their own possession. After this separation, some of these workers became vagrants and vagabonds, whereas others, or the descendants of these others, often ended in towns and cities in which private enterprises, manufacturers, and factories could use them as a hired labor force. In this way, the modern or “free” working class was created in Europe. In Marx’s theory, this class is a necessary precondition for a capitalist economy, for it is able to produce, for capitalists, more value than its maintaining demands in the form of wages. In Marxist thinking, the

private ownership of the means of production and the antagonism between the capitalist class and the working class belong to the distinctive marks of capitalism.¹

Weber (2010) had a more optimistic view of the first phase, for he saw it as an era of a religion-based enterprise culture that evolved in Protestant regions. For him, the first phase stood for an ideal period in the history of capitalism, since during it, religious values could still widely regulate the activities of entrepreneurs and, in this way, soften the impacts of capitalism on the rest of society. After this “value-rational” period, a capitalist economy mainly began to develop, in Weber’s theory, according to the rules of “formal” or “instrumental” rationality, which are rather indifferent in regard to substantial or qualitative value dimensions. Thus, Weber did not have an opportunity to see that the classical Western welfare state restricted the power of capitalism and markets in society, and, to a certain extent, subordinated them to a political regulation. Through this, substantial or qualitative values (social solidarity, equality, justice) gained a central place in the politics practiced by Western states in the phase of organized capitalism.

Art’s Relative Autonomy in Classical Modernity

In sociological theories of modernization, the era of classical or simple modernity usually comprises the end of capitalism’s first phase, as well as the phases of classical liberal capitalism and organized capitalism: that is, this era covers the time lag from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1970s. The most characteristic structural feature of classical modernity was, as we stated previously, functional differentiation. Consequently, in classical modernity, society consisted of functionally differentiated subsystems that were relatively autonomous in regard to each other. These subsystems were, of course, dependent on each other and on the rest of society, but each of them had its own specific function in society, as well as its own principles of operation or codes. To a certain extent, already, Marx, Émile Durkheim, and, especially, Weber elaborated on this sort of theory of modernity, and later, sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, Niklas Luhmann, and Jürgen Habermas, as well as Scott Lash and John Urry,

Table 1.2 Modern functional subsystems according to Niklas Luhmann

Functional subsystem	Its function in society	Its medium	Its medium code
(Capitalist) economy	Production ... of goods	Money	Payment/Nonpayment
Politics	... of collective decisions	Power	Owner/Object of power
Law	... of social order	Legality	Legal/Illegal
Science	... of new knowledge	Truth	True/Untrue
Education	... of qualified actors	Qualification	Qualified/Nonqualified
Art	... of world contingency	Beauty	Beautiful/Nonbeautiful
Religion	... of existential security	Faith	Mundane/Transmundane
Intimate relationships	... of emotional affection	Love or intimacy	Beloved/Nonbeloved
Health care	... of health	Illness	Healthy/Ill
Mass media	Dissemination	Information or attention	Information/ Noninformation
Sports	Physical exercise	Match	Win/Loss

Sources: Luhmann presented his own macrosociological theory of modern society above all in his work *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (Society's Society, 1997). In addition, in the 1980s and 1990s, he published several studies of single modern functional subsystems. I have constructed Table 1.2 on the basis of all of these works

have formulated their own versions of it. Table 1.2 shows how Luhmann understood modern society's functional differentiation.

As such, functional differentiation can be understood as a complex historical process whose different dimensions influenced each other reciprocally. The spread of capitalist ways of action and the formation of politically centralized and territorially large states were the main factors in this process that created new centers of prosperity and power in society. Due to these two large-scale changes, different subareas of social action could, then, detach themselves from the medieval Christian order of life, after which they began to transform, in society, into relatively autonomous subsystems. In Protestant countries, the Reformation renewed the ecclesiastical life from inside, and at the same time, it adjusted this life to better correspond to the moral and spiritual chal-

lenges that the societal–cultural developmental process aroused. As Weber shows in his well-known work *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism, 1904–06), it was, in particular, by creating a new kind of attitude to work and entrepreneurship that the Reformation also actively accelerated the spread of a capitalist entrepreneurial mentality in society (see Weber 2010).

Due to the process of functional differentiation, universities and natural sciences also became released from the ecclesiastical control and began to practice empirical and experimental research, which often included an idea of technical utilization. This, in turn, created a basis for modern technology and, from the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on, for the transformation of farming and trading capitalism into industrial capitalism.

Society's new economic–political structure created a cultural–political constellation in which artists were able to be emancipated from the direct control of churches and guilds, and later, also from the patronage of kings, courts, and wealthy patrons. These employers or commissioners were gradually replaced by cultural markets and an anonymous public, for whom artists, to a growing extent, now began to work. Through this, the premodern indefinite sphere of art transformed into the modern institution or system of art, as Habermas shows in his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Transformation of the Public Sphere, 1987a, published originally 1962). Unlike the premodern sphere of art, modern mediation institutions of art have aimed at reaching a wide public. In the eighteenth century, they included, among others, publishing houses, bookshops, public libraries, galleries, public museums, public concerts, permanent theaters, the press, art criticism, and public discussion on art. Institutions like these were mainly born in the late seventeenth century and, in particular, in the eighteenth century, and most of them were market-based by nature; that is, within certain limits, they treated products of art as commodities. Their public, in turn, increasingly consisted of people belonging to the estate of burghesses or the bourgeoisie that had become wealthy by farming and trading.

Habermas (1987a, 25–28, 60–94) points out that these newly born markets for art and the commodity form of art were historically progres-

sive phenomena, since it was due to these that artists were now able to express their own personality and their own view of the world more directly. In his art-theoretical magnum opus, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (Art as a Social System,² 1995), Luhmann, in turn, thinks that, originally, the modern subsystem of art focused on the production of beauty and “world contingency.” Thus, by creating aesthetic and fictional worlds, modern works of art have showed that the real or existing world is not the only possible world; other kinds of worlds, for example, more beautiful ones or socially more just ones, are possible as well. This was, according to Luhmann, for a long time the main function of the modern system of art in society. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, this kind of connection between art and beauty has, however, gradually lost its former self-evidence, but the creation of fictional or alternative worlds is, Luhmann continues, characteristic of contemporary art as well.

To this we may perhaps add that, quite obviously, the alliance between modern art and the contingency function has been ambiguous. On the one hand, by means of modern art, social actors have been capable of better questioning existing social arrangements and worldviews, but, on the other hand, this feature in modern art has also encouraged devotees of art to be mentally flexible and helped them to adjust themselves to the dynamics of modern society, that is, to continuous societal changes. In this sense, modern art has possessed both a critical and an adjusting side function in society.

Although the sphere of art constituted already by the late eighteenth century a differentiated subsystem, it was not until the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the idea of art’s autonomy began to become important in this subsystem and the rest of society. In this respect, Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilkraft* (Critique of Judgement, 1790), Schiller’s letters on aesthetic education (1794), and the art-philosophical writings of German romantics were important for the spread of autonomy thinking in European societies. Before this, the eighteenth century’s European art life was divided into two major branches, of which the aristocratic branch used to treat works of art as sources of entertainment and aesthetic pleasure or as symbols of the aristocratic class power. In contrast, the bourgeois Enlightenment culture regarded art and philosophy as a means for a radical moral–political education; in this situation, the bour-

geois branch had, thus, mainly an instrumental attitude to art and philosophy. However, after the collapse of the aristocratic society and the breakthrough of industrial capitalism, this social class began to give up its previous instrumental conception of art and, instead of it, to lay stress on art's independence of "external" goals. In this phase, Kant, Schiller, and German romantics gained a central position in Western thinking about autonomy.

Sociological theories of art have usually thought that the modern sphere of art was a relatively autonomous system from the late eighteenth century on. For Weber (1979), modern art's autonomy, primarily, meant that this art formed a *relatively independent value sphere* in society. Pierre Bourdieu (1992, 201–08) has later specified that this sort of autonomy includes the norm that aesthetic or artistic values cannot be reduced to economic or political utility or, more generally, to nonaesthetic or nonartistic values. Consequently, an aesthetically or artistically valuable work can be incompatible with established moral or religious values, and a work such as this might also lack a clear-cut economic or practical function. In his "Hymne à la Beauté" (Hymn to the Beauty, 1861), Charles Baudelaire expressed the core content of this aesthetics of autonomy in an elegant manner. In this poem, the speaker of the poem categorically says that he does not care whether the beauty comes from God or Satan; all that matters is the fact that it makes the days of our life more meaningful.

"Hymne à la Beauté" came out in the second edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil); the first edition of this collection of poems was published in 1857. This work and its public reception show how a differentiated sphere of art had achieved more freedom of expression by the mid-nineteenth century, but at the same time, how it could be driven into a conflict with other spheres of society, in this case with law and morality. After the publishing of the first edition of the work at issue, Baudelaire was brought before the court "for the disparaging of moral and good manners." As a result, French court imposed a fine on him, and certain poems in his work got a ban on publication that continued, in fact, until the year 1949. Hence, for example, Baudelaire's poems on lesbian love came out almost a century later than they had been written.

The aesthetics of autonomy has implied a wide *functional autonomy*. In classical modernity, art did not, in the first instance, serve political, economic, or other external purposes but “its own specific purposes.” In Habermas’ (1987b, 15–151) terms, modern secularized Western art has cultivated aesthetic-expressive rationality, by means of which modern subjects have been able to reflect on themselves and their relation to the world, as well as to better express their own subjectivity and personality. Through this, modern art has had important personal or subjective functions for its devotees, since it has taken care of their longing for personal unity and existential meaningfulness.

In simple or classical modernity, art gained a high degree of *normative autonomy* as well. The sphere of art elaborated largely for itself the valuation criteria of art and the principles of operation of the art world; these criteria and principles were not imposed on it by external authorities such as the state, educational institutions, or religious authorities. As Lash (1992, 4–11) has stated, in classical modernity, the sphere of art became, in this way, largely a self-legislating subsystem in society. By modifying Luhmann’s (1995) theory, we can also say that, as such, the sphere of art possessed a high degree of *autopoiesis* or *operative autonomy*: both the system of art and single works of art mainly determined themselves what they took from their environment and how they transformed these external sources into art’s internal elements.

Which social classes were the maintainers of this relatively autonomous sphere of art? In its classical phase, the modern sphere of art was, primarily, maintained by the social strata called *Bildungsbürgerschaft*, that is, by the educated and art-orientated strata in the upper classes. These strata were rich with cultural capital, but they did not always possess a lot of economic and political power. These people were deeply worried about the consequences produced by the industrialization, urbanization, and commodification of society, and, therefore, they wished to set limits on the capitalist expansion and the prevalent—“formal” or “instrumental”—rationality. Hence, they argued, the expansion of capitalism should not go further than necessary; it should not, for example, determine the value and function of works of art. On the contrary, the sphere of art had to be partly independent of these kinds of utilitarian and instrumental

demands; it had to be an area whose value and function cannot be expressed by means of economic, political, moral, or religious concepts, nor by the language of the prevalent societal rationality. For the social strata in question, the sphere of art stood for alternative, qualitative, or substantial values in a world of instrumental and quantitative values.

Thus, in its subsequent development, the modern system of art began to stand in a critical or tense relation with capitalist economy, especially with industrial capitalism. One of the most obvious manifestations of this state of affairs was the phenomenon of Bohemianism in the nineteenth century's European art life, especially in France. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello point out in their *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (The New Spirit of Capitalism, 1999, 34–90) that Bohemians were artists and intellectuals who strove to stay outside capitalist production and refused to do modern wage work; instead, they wished to live by devoting themselves to the creation of art, that is, to a human activity that they experienced as an area of freedom and nonalienated work. Besides Baudelaire, among others, Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine of poets, as well as Gustave Courbet, Vincent van Gogh, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec of painters, stood for the Bohemian lifestyle in the nineteenth century, with the consequence that most of them died prematurely from excessive use of alcohol and drugs.

Cultural Enterprises Versus Commercial Enterprises

So far, this chapter has ignored the question as to how the modern sphere of art could constitute a relatively autonomous subsystem in society and, simultaneously, lean on capitalist ways of action. In other words: how was it capable of reconciling the request for autonomy with rules of capitalist economy? In his *Les règles de l'art* (The Rules of Art, 1992), Bourdieu has answered these questions by distinguishing between two different types of enterprises in cultural production and mediation. This difference corresponds, roughly speaking, to the traditional dichotomy between high-cultural art and mass culture or cultural industry.

Bourdieu speaks first about enterprises that produce artifacts for limited markets. Enterprises like these operate on the basis of a long-term economic rationality or long-term business thinking. Instead of quick profits, these *cultural enterprises* collect symbolic capital: by their activities, they strive to increase, in society and art worlds, the belief in the symbolic or artistic value of their products. And, which sounds somewhat paradoxical, in order to achieve this goal in a plausible way, they even might pretend that they are not interested in the economic or commercial value of their own products. Yet, Bourdieu continues, at the same time, they presume that, in the long run, products that are recognized as symbolically or artistically valuable will prove to be valuable in the economic sense as well. In this long-term economic rationality, works of art are treated as largely autonomous objects in relation to short-term profit-seeking, but not in relation to profit-seeking as such.

As examples of the long-term economic rationality in cultural production and mediation, Bourdieu (1992, 204–05) mentions Gallimard, Les Éditions de Minuit, and Seuil, that is, three French high-literary and appreciated publishing houses that have been patient in their publishing operations. For example, in 1957, Les Éditions de Minuit brought out Alain Robbe-Grillet's avant-gardist novel *La Jalousie* (The Jealousy, 1957), sales of which began slowly. In the first year, it sold only 746 copies, after which its international reputation and commercial success grew evenly, and by the year 1968, it had sold nearly 30,000 copies. In 11 years, it had proved to be a valuable work both in the artistic and in the economic sense.

In Bourdieu's typology, successful cultural enterprises are able to create a balance between the rules of art and the rules of capitalist economy. In contrast, *commercial enterprises* neglect the rules of art and concentrate on short-term profit-seeking. Accordingly, their operations follow short-term economic rationality, and, in them, cultural production has a low degree of autonomy with regard to the dominant rules of capitalist economy. These kinds of enterprises produce cultural artifacts for expansive or large markets, and, in the area of literature, typical products in their supply are best sellers. Best sellers are characterized as products whose sale numbers are high in the first years or months but whose demand begins

to decrease rapidly after it. Bourdieu (1992, 202–21) remarks that scholars of art tend to ignore such products, and only seldom do their publishers take new editions of them.

Thus, according to Bourdieu, the modern subsystem of art was capable of achieving a certain degree of autonomy with regard to capitalist economy by making a compromise with this economy. In this compromise, cultural enterprises aimed, in the first instance, to acquire artistic and symbolic values, and, only after this, to produce economic profit. Or alternatively, they took into account the rules of capitalist economy only as far as it was necessary for the practicing of a “safe” and “successful” cultural entrepreneurial activity. There was, of course, a lot of variety in how single cultural enterprises understood this “safety” and “success.”

We may supplement these generalizations by stating that in the age of classical liberal capitalism, high-cultural art’s relative autonomy with regard to capitalism was not based solely on the operation principles of cultural enterprises. There were, in art worlds, also nonprofit associations and institutions, besides which the states could own or finance the institutions whose maintenance was too expensive for the private sector. In the nineteenth century, “national” art museums, theaters, opera houses and orchestras in different countries often belonged to the latter category. The state had this sort of active role, in particular, in small countries, in which cultural markets would not have been able to alone maintain a wide and well-functioning art life. Yet, after the Second World War, that is, during the age of the classical welfare state and state socialism, most of the European and North American states adopted a similar active role in their national art worlds.

The Phase of Organized Capitalism and the Expansive Welfare State

The shift from classical liberal capitalism to organized or regulated capitalism did not bring about radical changes in art’s relative autonomy, although this phase changed art’s relationship with the state and the rest of the public sector. In Western Europe and North America, the public

sector became a more central actor in art worlds after the Second World War, when these states built their welfare systems and also incorporated the art life into this large project. In this phase, these states saw art as a public service, the availability of which the state and the public sector must, to a considerable extent, take care of. To be sure, this principle chiefly concerned “noncommercial” and national art forms. The states aimed at protecting this kind of art’s position from the expansion of cultural industry, especially, from the expansion of American cultural capitalism. This aim they wished to achieve by increasing art’s dependency on the state and on the rest of the public sector.

At a more concrete level, the states and the public sector adopted an initiative role in art worlds’ financing and administration, in addition to which they extended the network of public cultural institutions. These arrangements did not usually, however, lead to a situation in which the state and the public sector would have carried out a systematic political–ideological or moral–normative control over art. The sphere of art preserved, in this phase, a certain degree of autonomy in regard to the political–administrative system. Its relatively autonomous position was secured through an arrangement in which the state and the public sector employed artists and other experts of art as decision-makers in public art administration. In research literature, this sort of relationship between the political–administrative system and the system of art has been described by means of the concept *arms length principle*. In this case, it points to a situation in which the public sector supported the arts without directly interfering in their own or internal questions. This sort of relationship between the system of art and the political–administrative system could not, of course, entirely prevent possible conflicts and tensions between these two systems, but it decreased them relatively effectively.

In these ways, the system of art could preserve a certain degree of autonomy both in regard to the political–administrative system and the system of capitalist economy. In this respect, the situation in Western Europe and North America was different from that in Eastern Europe and China. In these state socialist countries, the system of art was undoubtedly largely free of commercial or at least of private capitalist

goals, but on the other hand, these states and communist or socialist parties suppressed the system of art under a political–ideological and aesthetic control. There were, however, differences between European state socialist countries in matters of control. According to Marilyn Rueschemeyer (2005, 126–28), after the death of Josef Stalin in 1953, countries such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland began to tolerate ideological and artistic pluralism more widely than the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, which addressed rather rigid political, ideological, and aesthetic norms to the arts till the beginning of the 1980s. As for the rigidity of control, China might have been closer to these two countries.

The Contemporary Phase of Capitalism

When describing and interpreting the contemporary societal–cultural reality from the standpoint of art, several social and cultural theorists have presented that we are now living an era of *the end of art* or an era of *the end of genuine or authentic art*. A thought such as this comes up, especially, in Arthur C. Danto’s art-philosophical works and Jean Baudrillard’s sociological essayistic literature. Baudrillard (1983, 1997) has held that we live today in a highly commercialized communication society in which the omnipresence of media and information technology, as well as the massive consumption of goods and the large-scale aestheticization of everyday life, define the nature of social reality. Through this, the entire social reality would have transformed into an “artificial” or “simulated” network of signs, images and pleasurable objects, with the result that the subsystem of art has largely merged with mass media, cultural industry, design and the aestheticization of everyday life. Rather similar hypothetical generalizations have also been presented by Yves Michaud (2003) and Stefan Werber (1999).

In Baudrillard’s essays, the contemporary dedifferentiation process is caused by several different factors, and not only by the spread of capitalist economy into other subareas of society. In contrast, in his *The End of Art* (2004), Donald Kuspit, an American art philosopher, relates the process in question mainly to economic factors. According to him, today, the

world of visual arts is in a state of internal dissolution that is caused by the commercialization of its principles of operation. As a result, visual arts are now changing into a special kind of entertainment, and the institutions of visual arts tend to function as types of entertainment centers that offer stimulating experiences and different services to their “customers.” For Kuspit, this sort of art world is banal and superficial, and changes art into “post-art,” which is incapable of satisfying its devotees’ spiritual needs. In this interpretation, post-art, whose most well-known heroes are male artists such as Andy Warhol (1928–87), Jeff Koons (born in 1955), and Damien Hirst (born in 1965), has replaced the era of “genuine” or “authentic” art.

Kuspit is close to the view that capitalist economy was once a central precondition for the birth and establishment of the modern system of art, but now, it has exceeded its proper limits; this, in turn, has led to the decline of artistic culture and to the vanishing of the differentiated system of art. Although several intellectuals are perhaps ready to share this view, the chapters of this book do not stand for the conception that the specific and differentiated sphere of art has ceased to exist—or that capitalism has now entirely captured the system of art. As for the process of dedifferentiation, it has doubtless been ongoing in current societies, but has not led to the vanishing of all boundaries between different spheres. Besides the general process of dedifferentiation, two specific processes have determined the nature of the sphere of art in current society. On the one hand, this sphere has come close to economy in the sense that, from the 1980s on, its institutions and habits of operation have increasingly been privatized and marketized. In addition to this, a reverse process, that is, the process of artification or culturalization of the economy, is characteristic of current society as well. In this sort of economy, the production and marketing of goods require research work, product development, and design, whereas purely manual work has lost part of its significance in the production and value formation of goods, as Lash (2010, 98–100) aptly remarks. In this way, economic production and marketing have become more immaterial and creative, and more art-like. An *immaterial capitalism* or a *creative industry* or *economy* like this sells to consumers not only physical goods but also experiences and lifestyles, as well as sign values and image values associated with these goods.

Through these two processes, the spheres of art and economy have become closer to each other and, to some extent, merged with each other (Lash and Urry 1994, 4, 15, 64). For these reasons and in order to emphasize the role of immaterial and aesthetic factors in current economy, Jeremy Rifkin (2000) characterizes current capitalism as *cultural capitalism*, whereas Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy (2014) speak, in this connection, about *artistic capitalism*. Within certain limits, these concepts are useful in an analysis that concerns the relationships between the spheres of art and economy in current society. Despite this, it should, however, be noted that material or physical production has not disappeared from the world. Several non-Western states, in particular, are today, in an economic–social sense, partly in a similar situation as Western countries were in the early phase of industrial–capitalist revolution (McGuigan 2009, 37–38). In their case, the abovementioned concepts are not of especial relevance.

At any rate, it is just in regard to economy that the sphere of art has lost a great deal of the relative autonomy that it possessed in the eras of classical liberal capitalism and organized capitalism. This sphere is no longer self-evidently a peculiar and distinct value sphere, as the values of economy have become more central in it. Likewise, its functions and principles of operations have changed, for it is now more directly connected to capitalist ways of action. Is this decrease of autonomy also true of the normative area; that is, is the system of art now mainly governed and steered by external authorities?

As far as postsocialist European societies are concerned, we cannot answer this question in a simple way. After having been released from the authoritarian state and party organization, the sphere of art has, in these countries, undoubtedly gained more power of decision and ideological autonomy. In the 1990s, this freedom made of art a central channel of spiritual regeneration in postsocialist countries, but, as Aleš Erjavec (2014, 70, 75–77) appraises, later, art seems to have drawn away from this sort of function and even become marginal in postsocialist European societies.

In Western Europe and North America, the situation has perhaps been even more ambiguous. Since the 1980s, the sphere of art has, in this area, gained more autonomy with regard to the state and the public sector.

Certain actors in art worlds have felt this process of deregulation as a real liberation, but in several cases, artists and institutions of art have not been free to choose art worlds' new or commercial rules. On the contrary, often, they have been forced to follow these rules. Victoria D. Alexander and Anne Bowler (2014, 8) remark that, for example, today, the public support for the arts in Great Britain does not necessarily aim toward safeguarding art's relative independency of economy; a support like this is often connected to the demand that the arts should increase Great Britain's economic competitiveness and inspire its creative economy.

How have the rules or operation principles of art worlds changed concretely during the last decades? Olav Velthuis has answered this question by systematically and empirically exploring galleries in New York and Amsterdam at the turn of the ongoing millennium. In his *Talking Prices. Symbolic Meaning of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (2005), he states that Bourdieu's conception of cultural enterprises is still applicable to these American and Dutch galleries of visual art. Most of them do not strive for short-term profits but operate on the basis of a long-term economic rationality. This means that when a gallery begins to sell works of a certain artist, it, at the same time, patiently aims to increase the status of this artist and to create, both in society and art worlds, the belief in the artistic or symbolic value of his or her works. This gallery strives to achieve these goals by organizing exhibitions and public relations occasions, by influencing critics and experts of art, and by creating its own networks of collectors (Velthuis 2005, 27–28, 132–57). And if means like these prove to be successful, the exchange value of the works of the artist in question increases gradually in the long run.

In economic sciences, these kinds of markets are called *status markets*, for they do not operate with stable and standardized prices; instead, the prices of works are based on the status of the gallery owners and their artists (Aspers 2011, 81–111). Velthuis' study seems, thereby, to imply that, at least, galleries have not changed their ways of operation radically. He adds, however, that in galleries, the 1980s was a period of "overheating"; in that decade, collectors and speculators invested big sums of money even on young artists, which made, for example, Julian Schnabel (born 1951), for a short period, a superstar in American art life. Moreover, Velthuis (2005, 77–96) continues, the role of auction houses has, from

the 1970s on, been on the increase in the commercial sector of art worlds. Traditional galleries, in turn, often see auction houses as representatives of ruthless capitalism and speculation in art worlds.

Today, there are, in art worlds, more and more artists and institutions that act on the basis of a short-term rationality. Our current “project society,” whose future perspective is limited, favors this sort of mentality and artists who do not care about the Kantian principle of disinterestedness but strive directly to utilize their own artistic creativity for commercial purposes. If Warhol was a classical instance of this type of artist, Hirst and Koons have been its well-known representatives since the 1990s. The shift toward a short-term rationality can also be seen in the fact that private collectors are now ready to pay astronomical sums for contemporary art and works of living artists, a concept that might have been almost unthinkable still in the first half of the twentieth century, even if Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was already in the 1930s a rich man.

The current highly commercialized section of the transnational visual art world is characterized by the fact that, in 2013, the auction house Christie’s sold the Irish-born Francis Bacon’s (1909–92) triptych *Three Studies of Lucien Freud* (1969) for USD 142.4 million, and in May 2015, it sold Picasso’s painting *Les femmes d’Alger, Version ‘O’* (The Women of Algiers, Version ‘O’, 1955) for a still higher price, that is, for USD 179.4 million. This record was not, however, long-term, since in November 2017 Leonardo da Vinci’s (1452–1519) painting *Salvator Mundi* (Savior of the World) was sold at Christie’s auction house in New York for an astonishing sum of money, that is, for USD 450.3 million, which is, so far, the biggest sum of money ever paid for art in auctions. Likewise, in September 2008, there was, in the auction house Sotheby’s, a two days’ occasion or market performance by the name *Beautiful Inside My Head Forever*, in which Hirst himself sold his own works for USD 198 million. *The Golden Calf* (2008), a bovine animal with 18-carat gold horns and hooves, preserved in formaldehyde, and *The Kingdom* (2008), a preserved tiger shark, were the most famous works on this occasion.

Contemporary capitalism has produced not only extremely business-oriented artists and auction houses such as these but also huge inequality in resources and incomes in art worlds. It should be recalled that in several countries, visual artists are often relatively poor people and only a small minority of them are able to maintain themselves by means of their

own art. The same is, in part, true of art institutions such as libraries, theaters, orchestras, and opera houses, which must, for example, in the United States, often function by shrinking economic facilities. In contrast to this austere situation, for auction houses such as Christie's (headquartered in London) and Sotheby's (headquartered in New York), the current phase of globalization has opened up dazzling business prospects. Today, each of these two mega-scale actors has 85–90 offices in about 40 countries and nearly every continent, and, for example, in 2011, even 35% of Sotheby's sales took place in China, a new center of global capitalism (Alexander and Bowler 2014, 6).

From Michel Foucault's works, social scientists have learnt that power has a double nature: it is, simultaneously, restrictive and productive. Consequently, the contemporary economic–political power structure in society favors some layers of art and sets limits to others. Obvious winners in this new phase have been producers of commercial art, popular culture, and entertainment, whereas traditional high-cultural or relatively autonomous art has, to a considerable extent, lost its positions. Nor is the contemporary economic–political world order free of serious risks. Albeit this order has produced prosperity, its division is problematic, for, at the same time, this societal order has created enormous income disparities both globally and inside single societies, with the result that scholars such as David Harvey (2005) and Thomas Piketty (2013) have spoken about the return of the nineteenth century's old-fashioned class society. In addition, in contemporary societies, large numbers of people are doomed to suffer from permanent unemployment, short-term labor contracts, economic insecurity, and, just for these reasons, feelings of personal meaninglessness. One must also ask if the environment is capable of bearing the exertion that contemporary global economic production and consumption imposes on it. In this respect, the near future does not look bright and next generations will perhaps face the problems that decreasing natural resources and different environmental disasters can cause for society and human life.

Critical resistance against the contemporary economic–political world order has had different branches. First, from the 1980s and 1990s on, there have, everywhere in the Western world and its neighboring areas, emerged populist and conservative nationalist movements, which have become powerful during the last two decades. *Front national* in France, Vladimir Putin's Russia, Viktor Orban's Hungary, and Recep Tayyip

Erdogan's Turkey are the most well-known examples of this phenomenon, and the years to come will show us as to what extent the US President Donald Trump (2017–) will join this camp. At the level of economic policy and international trade, this camp has wished to replace the current economic–political world order with more protectionist practices. In this sense, it stands for a critique of the neoliberal world order. Second, we may speak about a democratic camp that began to strengthen in the 1990s along with the demonstrations against the world's economic leaders, as well as along with the meetings of international social forums. This branch is, however, much narrower than the nationalist–conservative branch. And third, there are Islamic movements that have been afraid of the loss of their own culture in the contemporary process of globalization. These movements' most radical sections (Al-Qaeda, ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria], Boko Haram) have exercised an open armed terror against their enemies, especially against Western states and Western people; whereas the Arab Spring in 2011–12 aimed, in the first instance, to renew the Arab societies from the inside.³

Of the abovementioned critical movements, it is obviously the second one that has been closest to the critique that art has presented against contemporary capitalism. In art, among others, Don DeLillo's and Michel Houellebecq's novels, and films such as Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* (1987) and *Wall Street: the Money Never Sleeps* (2011), Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), and Stephen Gaghan's *Syriana* (2006) strive to catch the spirit of current capitalism, especially the operation principles prevailing in banking and financial capitalism. A different kind of critical point of view manifests itself in Robert Guédiguian's film *Les neiges du Kilimandjaro* (The Snows of Kilimanjaro, 2011) and in Aki Kaurismäki's film *Le Havre* (2011), which do not directly describe the sphere of economy; both of them speak, instead, about values—solidarity, togetherness, respect for human dignity—that tend to be incompatible with the dominant values of the current market-based competitive society.

Furthermore, to this layer of critical art belongs activist art, which, in its own activities and projects, combines elements of art (community art, performance, street art) and direct political action with each other—as, for example, happened in the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011–12. Likewise, Ai Weiwei (China) and Pussy Riot (Russia) are relevant here,

although their critical works are somewhat ambiguous. It is not clear as to which target their critical works and actions have been directed. Do they stand for a critique of current capitalism or for a critique of authoritarian political order? Or do they possibly combine both of these elements in their artistic activities? In fact, the situation here might be even more complex, as Western media have eagerly praised Ai Weiwei and Pussy Riot, and represented them as the victims of unjust and heretical political systems. In part due to this, Ai Weiwei, particularly, has also managed to create a successful career in Western market-based art worlds.

Despite these phenomena, several theorists and critics of art share the thought that the grand age of artistic critique on society belongs to the past. Its golden eras would, thereby, have been the period of realism and naturalism in the nineteenth century, the age of classical avant-garde art in 1900–39, and the artistic–political movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This does not mean that critique would disappear in democratic–capitalist societies. According to Boltanski and Chiapello (1999), this type of society actually needs critique, for critique informs it about the dangers threatening it. In this way, critique helps this society to renew itself and to become more functional, and often capitalism is capable of productizing critique and transforming it into goods that can be bought and sold. If this description is accurate, today capitalism-critical art is in a difficult situation. After the collapse of different socialist experimentations, it has, in part, lost the utopian perspective, without which critique is in danger of becoming purely negative; and even if it possessed a perspective like this, it is possible that it will, in the last resort, finish as a commodity to be sold and bought on cultural markets. The book at hand aims at shedding light on the question of how far a gloomy description like this corresponds to the actual situation of current capitalism-critical art.

The Structure of This Book

When dealing with the abovepresented themes, this volume is divided into two major parts (Parts 2 and 3). After Part 1 (Introduction), Part 2 (Contemporary Capitalist Economy and the Demands of Art's Societal

Utility and Responsibility) concentrates on analyzing the relationship between contemporary capitalist economy and art worlds, besides which it critically considers the demand that art should be directly useful for the rest of society and participate in solving social problems. Part 3 (Alternative and Critical Art Production and Its Control) deals with art's relationship with contemporary capitalist economy from a slightly different point of view. It asks what sorts of capitalism-critical and alternative art forms exist in art worlds nowadays. In addition, it considers the role and nature of the censorship in contemporary Western societies.

Part 2 begins with Juhana Venäläinen's chapter, "Culturalization of the Economy and the Artistic Qualities of Contemporary Capitalism" (Chap. 2), which analyzes current capitalist economy and its affinity to art. This chapter offers a fresh point of view, for it does not deal with the marketization of art worlds but, instead, asks as to what extent current economy has adopted ways of actions, ideas, and role models from art worlds. After having analyzed current economic practices and John Cage's avant-gardist musical productions, the chapter concludes that in current capitalist economy, the work of the artist has, both in a positive and in a negative sense, become a model for a flexible, innovative, and productive way of working.

In his chapter, "The Neoliberal Marketization of Global Contemporary Visual Art Worlds: Changes in Valuation and the Scope of Local and Global Markets" (Chap. 3), Kangsan Lee analyzes the power structure and principles of operation of global visual art worlds. According to him, today, these global art worlds are increasingly penetrated by the norms and habits of operation of the global capitalist economy, that is, by the neoliberal marketization forces in general. This, in turn, has changed the conventional valuation and consumption practices in art markets and also altered the process of becoming a collector. At the same time, the macroprocess in question has made possible the current upsurge of Asian art markets, which has transformed the former relation between local and global art worlds. The most important transformation lies in that, today, Asian art markets, in particular Chinese and South Korean art markets, belong to the center of global visual art markets.

Ilaria Riccioni's chapter, "Art, Markets, and Society: Insights and Reflections on Contemporary Art" (Chap. 4), considers contemporary

art worlds from a slightly different point of view. The author points out that the current marketization of art worlds has led to a growing alienation of artists from their own works. On the other hand, new phenomena such as “community art” or “social art” can, however, be seen as an alternative to the process in question, although they simultaneously bring art close to practical social–political work. Riccioni’s concrete examples are from Italian art worlds, and in this respect, her chapter complements the first volume of our book.

Katarzyna Niziołek’s contribution, “Art as a Means to Produce Social Benefits and Social Innovations” (Chap. 5), is a continuation of the themes in Ilaria Riccioni’s chapter. After having reflected on the concept of “social art” theoretically, Niziołek summarizes that this concept refers to art forms that eschew profit-seeking and, instead of it, aim to bring about qualitative changes in ordinary people’s life worlds. Through this, social art also produces solutions to concrete social problems. Niziołek’s empirical sections are based on wide and systematic interviews. They have been gathered from Polish cities and villages whose inhabitants have suffered from problems such as unemployment, and social marginalization and passivity.

In the same part, Antoine Hennion’s chapter, “A Plea for Responsible Art: Politics, the Market, Creation” (Chap. 6), criticizes not only contemporary market-orientated art but also studies of art practiced in economic sciences and sociology. According to him, these disciplines have largely excluded value questions from their horizon and, in this way, have lost sight of the question of art’s deeper responsibility to society. For Hennion, this deeper responsibility to society or art’s more permanent value to society does not really occur in the current “creative economy” or in artistic projects striving to solve single social problems. On the contrary, he argues that art can, in itself, be valuable for society, as a spiritual phenomenon that guides us to see new things and to outline the world in fresh ways. In the last instance, Hennion is, thereby, defending art’s functional autonomy against all kinds of instrumental demands directed at it.

The common theme in Part 3 is capitalism-critical art. This part begins with Dan Eugen Ratiu’s chapter “Artistic Critique on Capitalism as a Practical and Theoretical Problem” (Chap. 7). The major focus in this chapter is Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello’s thinking. These two French

sociologists presented their own view of the functions of critique in capitalism in their widely discussed book *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (The New Spirit of Capitalism, 1999). Ratiu analyzes and appraises this book and the subsequent theoretical discussion concerning it, and at the end of his chapter, he formulates his own view of the functions of art in current society.

Gerard Vilar's and Dagmar Danko's contributions concentrate on specific representatives of current capitalism-critical art. Vilar's chapter, "De-aestheticization: The Dialectics of the Aesthetic and Anti-aesthetic in Contemporary Art" (Chap. 8), analyzes the anti-aesthetic movement in contemporary art, that is, a movement that has, for example, by making visually graceless or ugly works, aimed at functioning as a critical resistance to consumption-centric capitalism and the marketization of art worlds. Danko, in turn, deals with current activist art in her chapter "Artivism and the Spirit of Avant-Garde Art" (Chap. 9). An art such as this combines elements of artistic creation and direct political activism, and therefore, the concept "artivism" seems to catch its hybrid nature. The *Occupy Wall Street* movement in 2011–12 was a well-known representative of this sort of political–artistic activism, and Danko also considers the Arab Spring 2011–12, Pussy Riot, and Ai Weiwei as similar extensions of artivism.

Part 3 is closed by Anne Bowler's chapter, "Dirty Pictures: Scandal and Censorship in Contemporary Art" (Chap. 10), which considers censorship practices of the states and markets. This chapter shows that contemporary democratic–capitalist societies have their own means to control the arts and intervene in art worlds' internal activities, and besides this, they are capable of using controversies about art for political and commercial ends. The three controversy cases that Bowler analyzes in her study came from American, Austrian, and Finnish art worlds.

A common trait in several of the chapters in Parts 2 and 3 is the thought that art can best serve society by being loyal to itself and to its own specificity. Most clearly, this thought arises in Hennion's and Ratiu's chapters, which have been influenced by Jacques Rancière's writings. To be sure, a similar line of thought is included in Niklas Luhmann's art theory. Both Rancière and Luhmann see art as a thing that helps us to structure the world and our experience of it in different and creative ways,

or as a thing by which we form our picture of ourselves and of the world surrounding us. In our book's final article, or the Afterword (Part 4), "Manifestations and Conditions of Art" (Chap. 11), Aleš Erjavec is close to this thought as well, for he writes that a genuine art "will find its way." The more profound implication in this expression, adopted from the famous film *Jurassic Park* (1993), is the belief that, in spite of the ongoing marketization process of the cultural sphere, significant art is once again capable of elaborating upon its own means of expression and its own channels of distribution. Danko's and Vilar's chapters indicate that certain manifestations of modern and contemporary art have been truly inventive when seeking to avoid the fate of commodity and when trying to elaborate upon alternative forms of artistic production and distribution.

Notes

1. Marx (1974) presents his own view of original accumulation in the last chapter of the first volume of *Das Kapital* (1867). At the beginning of this volume, he formulates his own value theory.
2. This book's literal translation into English is, in fact, "The Art of Society." Despite this, the title "Art as a Social System" aptly expresses Luhmann's way of conceptualizing art.
3. Manuel Castells (2000, 2012) has presented a wider and a more systematic description of these types of movements. Besides these three movements mentioned in the text, they include, among others, the Mexican Zapatista movement and American fundamentalist movements.

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Part 2

**Contemporary Capitalist Economy
and the Demands of Art's Societal
Utility and Responsibility**

2

Culturalization of the Economy and the Artistic Qualities of Contemporary Capitalism

Juhana Venäläinen

Introduction

The uncertain destiny of arts and culture in the face of pressures from contemporary capitalism has been a repeated concern in academic and popular discussions. Art, today, seems to be facing two separate, yet interconnected tendencies that threaten to undermine its autonomy and critical potential. On the one hand, the neoliberal reorganization of the nation-states, having its roots in the late 1970s and yet intensifying in the “postcrash” austerity of the early 2010s, has questioned the legitimacy of art as a public good that should be supported by state funding. On the other hand, the potential for critical art is denounced by the now hegemonic business doctrines that idealize creativity as a state-of-the-art paradigm of management, with art acting as the metaphorical torchbearer of their liberatory euphoria. Within this dichotomist frame, art is caught between the devil and the deep blue sea: it is simultaneously undervalued as a nonessential burden upon stagnant national economies, and overvalued as an indispensable trailblazer for new economic growth.

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Looking from a systemic perspective, it may well be argued that the global art world is being increasingly penetrated by the norms and practices of the global capitalist economy. Even in itself, the art world has grown into a huge marketplace that stands out with its exaggerated fluctuations, extensive speculation, the articulated role of the dealers, and the curious gazes of observing audiences. There is a strange blend of affirmation and criticism in the reactions from within the art world to these developments (Velthuis 2005a). Capitalism, and the commercialization of art in particular, has provided a good target for critical art practices. Simultaneously, even the same artists that have posed the critiques may well have been among the beneficiaries of the criticized system.

The mutual history of art and capitalism can be understood as a history of transforming interdependence. What has been common for humanist and sociological approaches toward art research is that they have typically assumed an unidirectional causation in which “capitalism” (or “markets,” or “the economy”) is the explanatory variable, the cause of effects, whereas “art” (or “culture”) is the one to be explained or, as the statistical term *regressand* aptly warns, the one that “regresses,” adapts, and submits to the compelling demands of the more powerful domain. This correlates with the commonplace understanding of arts and culture as private, feminine, subjective, and “soft” vis-à-vis the economy as public, masculine, and objective, representing the “hard facts” of life. Consequently, when the hard and the soft collide, the hard prevails.¹

As said, there are good reasons to believe that this actually is the case; that the prevalence and pervasiveness of economic practices and economic discourses (Throsby 2001, 149) makes it hard not to see art as a victim of irresistible global processes. This chapter, however, takes a slightly different path. My aim here is to analyze the transmutation of the art–capitalism hybrid by purposely swapping the roles: by looking at how capitalism adapts and regresses, and how, correspondingly, art explains, exemplifies, and engenders this adaptation. Through this shift of focus, this chapter contributes to the growing body of literature on the social organization of cultural, informational, affective, and artistic capitalism.

The reason for turning the tables is twofold. First, an analysis of the changes in the art world as caused by the transformations of the economy is subject to a sort of methodological melancholy, which tends to roman-

ticize an idea of noncapitalist or precapitalist art as a field without power relations, and, respectively, to dissipate the critical potential still available within the ruptures between art and capitalism. Second, the analysis of “Economy” or “Capitalism” with a capital letter, as an independent actor or a self-standing social and sociological category, risks reifying it as a homogeneous totality, omnipotent but analytically void. Thus, more concern should be targeted at the internal contradictions of the current form of capitalism and toward the ways in which they put concepts in motion as new ingredients are poured into the “satanic mill” of the economy (Polanyi 1944).

My specific object of research is to examine how certain practices of postmodern art anticipated the reorganization of the capitalist mode of production after the “three glorious decades” of the Fordist–Keynesian reign (approximately 1946–75; see Fourastié 1979). The claim here is that the drastic shift from industrial manufacture to an age of services and to a creative economy can already be read through the ways in which the movements of historical avant-garde and, later, postmodern art sought to reinvent the production process of artwork. I will address the question by a contextual rereading, which approaches the problems of the present with concepts and materials from the past. In other words, the *presentism* of my analysis—reading the past through the looking glass of today—is fully intended. Nonetheless, I shall suggest that the parallels to be found between artistic practices and economic developments are not purely arbitrary, but that certain forms of art, even while not being openly “political,” may well anticipate the social changes, cultural climates, and economic developments of their own time.

The shared tenets of postmodern art and the postmodern economy can be examined as a set of qualitative transformations in the organization of the production process, referred to here as *the artistic qualities of postindustrial capitalism*. I will analyze three of these qualities that strive to disrupt and destabilize the foundations of the modern industrial commodity form: *ephemerality*, *relationality*, and *coproductivity*.

To elaborate the argument at a more concrete level, I will contextualize the analysis to the level a single work of art, the composer John Cage’s *33 1/3*, and the closely related intertexts of it (such as Cage’s diary notes). The works by John Cage (1912–92) have not been among the canonical

references in the sociology of art. However, as I see it, a notable portion of Cage's oeuvre is valuable not only as an inspiration for the philosophy of music (like *4'33"*) or musicology (like the early works for prepared piano and percussion), but also for a more general outlook on the aspirations of the post-World War II art world and its resonances with the concurrent economic developments. *33 1/3*, a happening piece "composed" and premiered in 1969, also fits temporally well with my argument, being situated in the years of growing social and cultural movements and the *artistic critique* (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) of the late 1960s.

The chapter progresses as follows. First, I will introduce the discourse of *the cultural economy* as popularized in the policy debates of the last 15 years. This discourse provides a viable backdrop for my argument by proclaiming arts, culture, and creativity as the key drivers of growth in postindustrial economies. However, I will argue that the quantitative and sectoral understandings of culture in these debates are far from satisfactory, and that the role of art in the whole of the creativity hype is ambiguous. For a more comprehensive picture, the cultural turn of the economy should be interpreted as a qualitative shift in the mode of production, which is what I will pursue in the second part. In contrast to the statistical understandings of the cultural economy, *culturalization of the economy* is not confined to a single sector or to a set of creative occupations; instead, it penetrates the practices of production, distribution, and consumption transversally, throughout the industries. Third, I will go on to analyze Cage's *33 1/3* as a case of the artistic qualities first introduced in postmodern aesthetics and later translated into the organizational principles of the postindustrial economies. Finally, I will conclude my argument by discussing the capabilities of art to reinforce and resist economic discourses and developments on a more general level.

The Political Promise of the Creative Economy

From the turn of the millennium, the predominant way to frame the question of the economic importance of arts and culture has undoubtedly been the debate on *creative industries*. Early instances of the debate appear in the policy discourse of the 1990s, first in the Australian Labour

government's Creative Nation initiative in 1994, and a few years later, in the United Kingdom, where a governmental body, Creative Industries Task Force (CITF), was established to assess the economic contribution of the cultural industries toward the national economy.

Creativity was to become the buzzword of prospected economic growth for the twenty-first century (Garnham 2005) and the policy discourse developed hand in hand with a rising academic and popular interest in the topic, with highly influential works such as John Howkins' *The Creative Economy* in 2001 and Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* in 2002 spurring the discussion further. Adoption of the creative industries' terminology provided a way for cultural policy-makers to legitimize their concerns about arts and culture in the neoliberal hegemony by linking them to the core of economic development (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 144). Moreover, the discourse served to articulate the notion of creativity as the key factor of innovation policies. In the 2001 edition of CITF's *Creative Industries Mapping Documents*, the Secretary of the State Chris Smith writes:

I want all businesses to think creatively, to realise creativity is not an add-on but an essential ingredient for success. I want our creative industries in particular to continue to seize the opportunities of a fast-changing world, to think 'out of the box', to innovate, to be flexible and swift, and to strive to realise their full potential. (DCMS 2001, 00:03²)

In the European Union (EU), the promotion of cultural economy was one of the key themes of the Lisbon Strategy, a political process that hailed the concepts of an information society and knowledge economy, having a goal of making the EU by 2010 "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (KEA 2006, 1). In 2006, a report published by the European Commission to serve as a backdrop for the strategy process underlined the importance of culture for the growth of the European economy, stating that, in 2003, the cultural sector already contributed an annual turnover of €650 billion and a share of 2.3% of the total gross domestic product (GDP), figures that outweighed more traditional industries such as car manufacturing, information and commu-

nication technology (ICT), and real estate. In this report, the cultural sector also boasted a higher growth rate than the rest of the economy (Ibid., 1, 6). A more recent report commissioned by the French think tank Forum d'Avignon claims to confirm the results of the relatively high importance of the creative sector in Europe, estimating a GDP share of 4.4% (€ 558 billion) and an employment share of 3.8% (8.3 million jobs) for the “core” industries. For the “total” industries, the figures are evidently even higher (Forum d'Avignon and TERA Consultants 2014).

However, there is an interesting tension between the quantitative–sectoral approximations and the more ubiquitous understandings of the role of creativity in generating economic growth. In the policy discourse, the terms “cultural” and “creative” are used very flexibly and often almost interchangeably. This has led to a broadening of the already ambiguous category of the cultural industries, or “CIs,” to an amalgam of the cultural and creative industries, or the “CCIs,” a conceptual multitool that incorporates a batch of divergent and potentially contradictory connotations (Gibson and Kong 2005). The implicit definition of culture given on the webpage for European cultural statistics, Eurostat, is revealing for the point in question. Culture, here, is seen as an “utmost important aspect of human development for centuries, be it as an economic activity or as a potential for developing well-being and social cohesion” (Eurostat 2013). Similarly, the *Creative Industries Mapping Documents* in the United Kingdom define creative industries as those which “have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS 2001, 00:05). In other words, individual talent or even the long history of “human development” is articulated as a more specific and a more short-term function of capital accumulation through cultural commodities.

As a logical continuation for the economic expectations from commodified culture, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has introduced the notion of *copyright industries*—a category that serves as a catch-all for the most profitable parts of culture. The scope of the copyright industries is even wider than in the earlier definitions of CCIs: it extends from the “core” industries to the “interdependent,” “partial,” and “non-dedicated support” activities (WIPO 2003, 28–35). This four-

fold hierarchical model is supported by an elaborate methodological framework for assessing the economic performance of copyright industries at the national level (WIPO 2003). To date, local researchers have conducted over 40 national studies with the assistance of WIPO experts. According to a meta-analysis of the studies, the economic contribution of the copyright industries varies significantly across countries, from 2% of GDP in Brunei to 11% in the United States, with an average of 5.2%, and the share of employment averaging at a similar figure, 5.3%. The study also points out that there is a positive correlation between the share of GDP in copyright industries and the overall growth of the national economy (WIPO 2014, 2–3).

Even outside of the WIPO framework, the two most commonly used indicators for assessing the importance of CCIs are the added value for the national GDP and the share of employment attributable to them. Both of these measures rely on an understanding of the economy as consisting of discrete sectors or industries, which in the European context are typically mandated by the NACE (*Nomenclature statistique des activités dans la Communauté européenne*) classification utilized by the national statistics offices.

The limitations of the sectoral approach are well-known. First of all, it is often impossible to determine whether a single sector of data collection would count as creative or not (Cowen 2011, 120). A typical example of the problem is the publishing and print press industry, which includes very creative occupations and services (such as copywriting) and very monotonous forms of work (such as the more “industrial” occupations of the print press). Consequently, a definitional problem arises: which industries should be included, and by which criteria? (Throsby 2011, 158–59). The difficulties of demarcation lead to arguably overextended categorizations, aggregating highly dissimilar industries such as jewelry, fashion, and software development (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 179). Apart from the problems in classification, a lack of commensurable longitudinal data makes it difficult to evaluate the hypothesis of a cultural turn in the economy even in the scope of a national economy, not to mention in an international comparison (Towse 2011, 127).

Despite the considerable methodological doubts, there is at least suggestive evidence of the growing magnitude of the creative/

cultural/copyright industries (Hesmondhalgh 2007, 90, 181; Towse 2011, 127; Fig. 2.1) and their correspondence with economic growth more generally (WIPO 2014). But what is the more specific role of *art* in these debates, then? It is ambiguous, to say the least. On the one hand, art occupies a special role as a point of reference for the most symbol-intensive industries. On the other hand, the direct economic output of the traditional arts sector, in comparison with the broader cultural or creative industries, is rather modest.

For example, in the United Kingdom, a report commissioned by the Arts Council of England and the National Museum Directors' Council estimated a national GDP share of 0.4% for the arts and the culture industry in 2010, whereas the government statistics for the creative economy gave a figure of 5.2% (for 2012) (CEBR 2013; DCMS 2014). In other words, the share of arts and culture in the total added value of the creative economy would be less than 10%. In the United States, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) estimated the contribution of "arts and cultural production" at 3.2% of GDP compared with the figure of 11.3% for "total copyright industries" given by another study (NEA 2013; Siwek 2013).

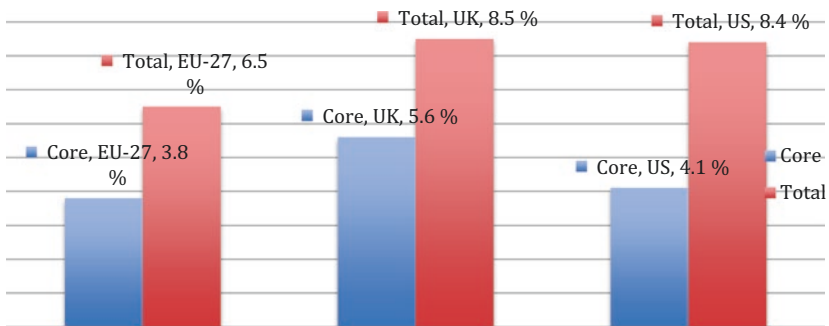


Fig. 2.1 Estimates of the share of employment in cultural, creative, and/or copyright industries, 2011–12 (Sources: Forum d'Avignon and TERA Consultants 2014 (EU-27); DCMS 2014 (UK); Siwek 2013 (US). Definitions: EU-27: Employment in the "core" and "total" creative industries of the current member states of the European Union, excluding Croatia, in 2011. UK: Employment in "creative industries" and "creative economy" in the United Kingdom in 2012. US: Employment in "core" and "total" copyright industries in the United States in 2012.)

Even categories such as “arts and culture” might be too broad to account for what their labels imply. Here, it is worthwhile to consider, for a moment, the subsectoral breakdown of the US arts and culture statistics. These statistics, produced by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) in cooperation with NEA, are based on a system of satellite accounting that does “not change the official U.S. Economic accounts” but instead aims to “provide greater detail [...] and allow analysis of a particular aspect of the economy” (NEA 2013). The scope of arts and culture in these statistics is rather wide, consisting not only of traditional forms of cultural production but also of areas such as information services, design and advertising, and various forms of live entertainment (such as ice-skating shows). Consequently, the largest contributors to the economic performance are to be found in areas whose status as arts and culture would be most disputable. In the 2011 figures, the top arts and cultural commodity is the subsector called “the creative content of advertising,” which contributed 21.8% of the gross output. Cable television, film, and video industries contributed another 20.0%.³ In terms of value added, the “information” sector (consisting mostly of the subgenres of media economy) had a share of 39.4%, while the share of performing arts, museums, and art education was at 11.6%, equaling only 0.4% of the national GDP—a figure comparable to that in the British report (NEA 2013, n.d.; BEA 2013).

The conclusion of this cursory review would be that what is portrayed as the economic triumph of “arts and culture” is, in more concrete terms, widely explained by the growing economies of the information sector, and especially by the turnovers of media and advertising. Whether this amalgamation of categories is defensible is not strictly an empirical question, but goes back to the more general issue of what actually is argued or implied with the political promise of the cultural economy. We could talk about the *political performativity* of statistics: the data generated for the cultural economy debate does not merely describe the world but also contributes to the efforts of changing it. In Habermasian terms, the *knowledge interest* behind the proliferation of the data collection and the reports on the cultural economy is not of a technical but of a practical kind, and can thus only be understood in tandem with the new political-economic role of culture. Quoting a UNESCO (United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) report on the assessment methodologies of the cultural industries, the question on how to define, classify, and measure the economic contribution of cultural industries “cannot be answered independently of specific objectives of policy perspective” (UNESCO 2012, 29).

On the whole, it is evident that the direct economic output or the employment in the arts sector is not the key factor that would explain the alleged significance of art for capitalism today. Rather, as I will argue, it is the idealization of art as the vantage point of creativity, on the one hand, and its exemplary role in the creative organization of the production process, on the other, that make their relation comprehensible and significant.

Culturalization of the Economy as a Qualitative Turn

Already back in 1994, sociologists Scott Lash and John Urry, in their book *Economies of Signs & Space*, anticipated a shift in a global organization of production that could be now labeled as *the culturalization of the economy*. This transformation has little to do with the quantitative and policy-focused framings of the cultural economy discussed earlier, but is more related to a qualitative and structural analysis of the shift from the Fordist to the post-Fordist mode of production, which occurred gradually during the 1960s and culminated in the 1970s and 1980s. While the Fordist regime was characterized by the mass production of identical material goods to the consumer markets within a vertically integrated firm (Lash and Urry 1994, 113; Neilson and Rossiter 2008, 55–57), post-Fordism, on the contrary, celebrates the unique, the aesthetic, and the immaterial, having its production process scattered geographically, temporally, and among a large number of individual microproducers.

If the leading mental image of the Fordism of the 1910s was the T-Ford assembly line circumscribed within the factory walls, the experience of post-Fordism in the 2010s could be illustrated with a picture from a cafeteria-like coworking space (preferably in an abandoned industrial complex) packed with freelance professionals, artists, and researchers, all

of them immersed with their personal laptops, schedules, and projects to manage, but still trying to maintain a degree of sociability to allow for spontaneous collaboration. The imagery of an industrial factory has been replaced by the one of a *social factory*, where artists, designers, and new media workers are supposed to take the lead as the model entrepreneurs of the creative class (Gill and Pratt 2008). Ideal types surely present an easy target for criticism, yet they also convey a grain of truth. The social nature of creative work may not be the everyday reality of the population as a whole, but it may still pose a paradigmatic figure for organizing work in postindustrial capitalism.

Lash and Urry argue that one of the major misconceptions in the cultural industry debate has been the overemphasized or misguided concern over the commodification of culture. The commodification argument assumes that in the course of capitalist development, the production of culture becomes more and more like a manufacturing industry. This conception is most clearly articulated in the Frankfurt School's notion of the culture industry as the mass production of false consciousness. Conversely, Lash and Urry point out that already in the golden age of industrial capitalism, the culture industries were more "innovation-intensive" than the rest of the economy, representing a paradigm that the later developments in the reorganization of production would follow. Thus, instead of arts and culture being subsumed by the logics of the market, ordinary manufacturing will resemble the production of culture: "It is not that commodity manufacture provides the template, and culture follows, but that the culture industries themselves have provided the template" (Lash and Urry 1994, 123). Certainly, commodification is still a key issue, but it is the copyright, not the assembly line, that sets the standard.

In accordance with Lash and Urry, Michael Hardt (1999) argues that the contemporary economy has become "postmodernized." This implies that the focus of economic valorization lies no more on producing material goods by processing natural resources, but on the production of *immaterial commodities* such as knowledge, experiences, affects, attitudes, and expectations. Contrary to the typical misunderstandings, the claim here is not that the domain of material production would have suddenly disappeared, but that it has nevertheless been pushed away from the core

of value creation to the periphery, where it will serve as a backdrop to the more precious processes in the value chain.

In terms of organizing labor, immaterial production deviates drastically from the norms, values, and practices of the industrial–Fordist phase of capitalism. Manufacture, generally speaking, expected workers to act in a predictable and monotonous manner, adapting to the pace of the assembly lines by which they stood. In stark contrast to this, immaterial production calls for originality, individuality, and the capability to constantly transform oneself according to the needs of the particular situation (Virno 2004). The new virtues of a worker are similar to those of a creative artist: to innovate, to improvise, to go against the grain, to find one’s unique style, and to convert oneself into a successful brand.

While there is a plethora of theories that resonates the idea of a cultural mode of production, they only scarcely discuss arts and culture as the specific site of this transformation. Recently, the French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky and the film critic Jean Serroy have introduced the concept of *artistic capitalism* to describe the ever-more ubiquitous aestheticization of the world. Tracing the origins of the proliferation of the aesthetic domain from the 1860s onward, they argue that it is the *transaesthetic* phase of the last three decades, characterized by developments such as globalization, financialization, and deregulation, that leads the way for the unrestricted inflation of the aesthetic domain (Table 2.1). In the “hypermodern” capitalism, the world of markets has widely incorporated the logics that were previously understood as belonging to the world of art: styles, dreams, seductions, and entertainment. These features help to sustain contemporary capitalism as an “economic-aesthetic complex” (Lipovetsky and Serroy 2013, 37–39).

Extending upon these lines of thought, culturalization of the economy could be defined as the process in which cultural materials, practices, qualities, tendencies, norms, and values that were typically understood as belonging to the sphere of culture, and thus being relatively independent of market valuation or being “noneconomic” altogether, are increasingly being integrated into the production process. It is truly a “regression” for the modern notion of the economy, which by the Marginalist revolution of the nineteenth century had developed into the most autonomous form ever seen, leaving behind the chains of society, culture, and morals with

Table 2.1 Three phases of artistic capitalism

Phase of artistic capitalism	Historical period	Hallmarks
Restricted	1860s–1950s	Birth of departmental stores, industrial design, haute couture, advertising, film, and musical industry
Extended	1950s–1970s	Spread of artistic logics into economic and social domains through fashion, advertising, and so on
Transaesthetic	1980s–present	Cross-industry hybrids between art, fashion, design, and commerce

Source: Summarized from Lipovetsky and Serroy (2013)

the invention of *Homo economicus*, the nonpersonal rational agent. Now, with culture being subsumed in the domain of economy again, and not only as simple commodities but at the level of its more fundamental logics, the understandings of “the economic” are in flux and open to new interpretations. It is in this context that I will next present my discussion of the artistic qualities of contemporary capitalism.

Artistic Qualities of Contemporary Capitalism: Lessons from John Cage

In the fall of 1969, composer John Cage set up a happening entitled *33 1/3*. This event, named after the standardized spinning velocity of the 12-inch vinyl record, took place as a part of the one-day festival “Mewantemooseicday,” codirected by composer Larry Austin and held at the University of California at Davis. In this work, 8 sound systems, 12 turntables, and some 300 records were arranged on tables in a room without any chairs to sit on. Loudspeakers were distributed around the space. The audience that entered the room did not get any instructions, but after a while, people started to play records, creating an uncoordinated and transitory assemblage of readymade sonic materials (John Cage Trust 2014b).

33 1/3 has been attributed to the genre of *musicircus*, introduced by Cage two years earlier in a work with the same name. *Musicircus* (1967)

was an extreme example of an open composition, “an invitation to bring together any number of groups of any kind, preferably in a large auditorium, letting them perform simultaneously anything they wish, resulting in an event lasting a few hours” (Dickinson 2014). It has been considered as the most anarchic and antiauthoritarian of Cage’s works: there were no instructions, no distinction between performers and the audience, no form of prescribed coordination whatsoever—“neither ensemble nor counterpoint, but rather simple coexistence” (Brooks 2002b, 221). In the same vein, *Mewantemooseicday*, as the performance context of *33 1/3*, constituted a remarkable “circus” of music, even if in a slightly more organized form: there was a total of 18 hours of musical and extra-musical program, including a performance of Erik Satie’s *Vexations*, performances by the university orchestra and band, lectures given by Cage, and film presentations (Pritchett 1996, 158).

After the premiere, *33 1/3* has been seldom performed, never recorded, and only scarcely mentioned in research. Nonetheless, the work incorporates a set of distinctive features that project it as a relevant example not only of Cage’s own work in the 1960s but also of the experimental aspirations of postmodern art of that time more generally. And more importantly for the argument at stake, it anticipates the tendencies of ephemerality, relationality, and coproductivity, all of which would soon begin to reformulate the avant-garde of postindustrial economic practices.

Ephemerality

LXXIV. Ephemeralization. Away from the earth into the air. Or: “on earth as it is in heaven.” More with less: van der Rohe (aesthetics); Fuller (society of world men). Nourishment via odors, life maintained by inhalation: Auguste de Comte (*Syteme de Politique Positive*, second volume). (Cage 1969, 152–153)

Lash and Urry (1994, 4) argue that in post-Fordist economies, objects are progressively emptied of material content. Economist Diane Coyle, in *The Weightless World* (1997), elaborates upon the same argument of immaterialization through an anecdote from a speech by ex-Fed chair-

man Alan Greenspan, in which he discusses the shift of focus in the economy from big physical objects (“steel, huge cars, heavy wooden furniture”) to small or even intangible things (“transistors rather than vacuum tubes, fibre-optic cables or satellite broadcasting rather than copper wire, plastics rather than metals”). The real punch line of the speech is here: “While the weight of current economic output is probably only modestly higher than it was half a century ago, valued added adjusted for price change has risen well over three-fold” (Quoted in Coyle 1997, viii). In essence, Greenspan remarks that the creation of economic value had become detached from the creation of physical objects.

A typical 12-inch vinyl record weighs between 140 and 200 grams. However, it is not this mass, or even this *material*, the engraved disk made of polyvinyl chloride, that explains the value of Cage’s artwork. It is not the score either: in fact, there was none, and the sheet music later published by C.F. Peters is only a half-page description of what once happened (Cage n.d.). *33 1/3* replaced the goal of producing a lasting, stable object of art with a temporarily staged artistic *process* in which the material domain of production—the exhibition room, the turntables, the vinyl records—only served as a backdrop to the immaterial production of a social arrangement.

As Jeremy Rifkin shows in *The Age of Access* (2000), owning things has become rather unattractive in current business practices. Real estate property, big stocks, or expensive machinery is not seen as an advantage but as a burden and a risk in an environment that requires the capability to react rapidly to unpredictable fluctuations. Thus, instead of clinging to the material, firms try to expel it, concentrating solely on the production of *ideas*. Rifkin’s argument is essentially the same as Cage wrote in his diary notes of 1965: “We are getting rid of ownership, substituting use. Beginning with ideas. Which ones can we take? Which ones can we give?” (Cage 1969, 3). The introduction of the genre of *happening* in the 1950s and 1960s resembles a similar shift, where the predetermined compositional materials are replaced by the “immaterial materials” derived from the collaborative situation itself, and the permanence of the artwork is replaced by the ephemerality of the performance.

As a happening piece, the most obvious predecessors of *33 1/3* are, in addition to *Musicircus*, the untitled event at Black Mountain College in

1952 (also known as *Black Mountain Piece*) and *Theatre Piece* in 1960 (Fetterman 1996, 125). *Black Mountain Piece*, widely considered as the first-ever happening (Fetterman 1996, 104), gathered a truly multidisciplinary group of artists, with M.C. Richards and Charles Olson reading poetry, painter Robert Rauschenberg playing scratchy records with an Edison phonograph, Nicholas Cernovitch projecting a film onto Rauschenberg's white paintings, Merce Cunningham dancing, and David Tudor playing the piano. The composer himself stood on a ladder, dressed in a black suit and reading excerpts from the "Juilliard Lecture" (Miller 2002, 151). In *Theatre Piece*, the nonsymbolic and nonpurposeful cooperation is achieved through a highly complex but abstract score that lets the performers choose a set of actions (in effect, a list of 20 nouns and/or verbs) while still strictly mandating their timing and juxtaposition (Fetterman 1996, 104–108).

The complexity approach was soon to give way for the more minimal, or even nonexistent, performance notes. William Brooks describes the development in Cage's compositional means as a passage from concrete to abstract descriptions. First, in the works of the 1950s, compositional structure was subsumed into the method while materials were still mandated by the composer himself or by circumstances. In the 1960s, materials were also subsumed, and neither sounds nor durations were predetermined. In the late 1960s, as in *Musicircus*, even the method had disappeared. That which remained was only the form, though not as an organizational principle but as manifested in the act of *naming* a piece. This was the limit of Cage's experimentalism: everything was to be liberated but the abstract categories of "composition" and "composer" themselves (Brooks 2002a, 129).

The detachment of the composer resonates with the post-Fordist reorganization of the production process where the capitalist-investor steps aside from the concrete realm of the shop floor to a virtual mode of control (Moulier Boutang 2011, 50), operating through the informational and financial layers of the economy. It highlights the role of human capital and innovation, giving the workers (or, in this case, the collaborating audience) the freedom to decide on the details of getting things done. As Cage notes in his diaries, this calls for a new ideal worker with the new skills of flexibility and self-organization:

When our time was given to physical labor, we needed a stiff upper lip and backbone. Now that we're changing our minds, intent on things invisible, inaudible, we have other spineless virtues: flexibility, fluency. Dreams, daily events, everything gets to and through us. (Cage 1969, 51)

Relationality

For Cage, the avant-gardist aesthetic production was integrally related to the contemporary metropolitan conditions, where the fragmented nature of the everyday experience correlated to the compositional forms in which the seemingly nonrelated sounds would coexist as an unexpected montage (Branden 2002, 143). The specific sonic content of the used materials was only of secondary importance, for what was highlighted was the potential for creating new combinations—relating the unrelated.

In the 1960s more generally, Cage's focus in composition shifted from organizing materials to a more abstract level of organizing processes (Williams 2002, 234), or what could be understood in economic terms as the reshaping of the means of production. For example, *Variations I–VI* (1958–63) do not include notated parts for individual players, but instead provide instructions for “parts to be prepared from the score” through processes that combine intentional and nonintentional elements, such as superimposing plastic transparencies with graphic notation on a map that was to be made by the performer for each context specifically. Composer Gordon Mumma, who collaborated with Cage on many projects, describes the curious tension between freedom and planning as follows:

[Normally] Cage set up the architecture but then allowed the internal decor to be subject to chance operations – [that is, there were] defined structures that permitted internal maneuverability. Cage was incredibly disciplined. He planned what he was going to do – or what was going to be done – the results of which were often beyond predictability. (Cited in Miller 2002, 159)

The “means of production” of *33 1/3* consisted of the amplified turntables (“machinery”) and the records with random contents (“raw materials”). Cage had experimented with turntables already in 1939 with

Imaginary Landscape No. 1, which is, along with Ottorino Respighi's *Pini di Roma* (1924), considered as one of the earliest electroacoustic works ever composed (John Cage Trust 2014a). In contrast to *33 1/3*, it required specific records to be played: two Victor "frequency records" (with a sweeping sound between low and high frequencies) and one constant note record. The turntables were accompanied by a muted piano and a cymbal (John Cage Trust 2014a).

As a work that employs technological "noninstruments" as sources of indeterminate sounds, *33 1/3* relates perhaps more closely to the various pieces composed for radio receivers, such as *Water Music* (1951), *Radio Music* (1956), and *Music Walk* (1958). One of the most well-known of the radio works is *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951), which calls for 12 radios, with two performers at each: one dialing the stations, the other one controlling amplitude and timbre. The piece is written in conventional notation that indicates precisely how to control the radios, but since the content transmitted through the radio waves at a certain moment is independent of the performers, the end result is virtually indeterminate. Quoting Alastair Williams, the work is thoroughly post-modernist in the way it "produces sounds in space without providing a schema by which to understand them" (Williams 2002, 229). We could add that it is also thoroughly *relational*, as it only prescribes how to bring the elements together, without taking a stand on their contents.

The use of readymade materials in a nonintentional and nonrepresentational manner was confusing even for expert audiences. As the premiere of *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* took place late in the evening, most of the radio stations had already gone off. Thus, the performance had a lot of awkward moments of "nothingness," which was a disappointment to some. Cage himself, however, was happy about the unintended silences and the lack of control of the result (Fetterman 1996, 18–19).

In *33 1/3*, Cage is "composing" (lat. *com + poner*) in the literal sense of the word: just putting things together and dealing with the heterogeneity of the available and emerging materials. He does not try to provide any specific product but rather the very circumstances and conditions in which production can take place. He provides the moment for an assemblage to emerge and a site for "a lot of people working together without getting in each other's way" (Cage and Charles 1981, 180).

Coproductivity

They taught us art was self-expression. You had to have “something to say.” They were wrong; you don’t have to say anything. Think of the others as artists. (Cage 1973, 17)

In giving primacy to the participating audience, Cage’s work anticipates the ideas of the blurring relations between the producer and the customer, or the supply and the demand, in postindustrial economies. Portmanteaus such as *prosumer* (Toffler 1980), *produsage* (Bruns 2008), *weisure* (Conley 2009), and *playbor* (Kücklich 2005) all serve to highlight the active role of the customer-user, who, instead of the investor or the foreman, is now seen as the primary agent in the production cycle.

During Fordism, the factory had a “mute” relation between production and consumption (as in the romantic–modernist relation between the artist and the audience), producing a certain amount of particular commodities regardless of customer preferences. In the organizational principles of *Toyotism* (Coriat 1994), the direction of the assembly line was inverted. The new goal was *just-in-time production*, where the initiative is always on the customer’s side and where the circulation of information becomes the central element in governing the production process (Hardt 1999, 93–94; Moulier Boutang 2011, 52).

With *33 1/3*, Cage went further from the Toyotist model, in which “each audience member’s observations structure the performance” (Fetterman 1996, 142), to a veritable model of coproduction. In the absence of the composer or professional performers, audience members are put onto the stage as the true protagonists of the story, who themselves have to make the necessary decisions and actions when constructing the piece. In this way, *33 1/3* was a culmination of the detachment of the creative genius, leaving space for the audience to take the lead.

Cage explicitly writes about the production of art as a mode of *social production* that does not emerge from disciplinary rule but from a more positive, constructive form of power. From this point of view, it is more important to encourage people to do *something* instead of discouraging them with detailed instructions. For example, in the diary notes of 1966–67, he remarks:

An audience can sit quietly or make noises. People can whisper, talk and even shout. An audience can sit still or it can get up and move around. People are people, not plants. “Do you love the audience?” Certainly we do. We show it by getting out of their way. [...] Art instead of being an object made by one person is a process set in motion by a group of people. Art’s socialized. It isn’t someone saying something, but people doing things. (Cage 1969, 51, 151)

For Cage, the liberation of the audience was not purely an aesthetic choice but also a political gesture with which the liberation of sounds (from their representational or intentional uses) and the liberation of people (from their prescribed modes of conduct) together could be seen to fulfill his antiauthoritarian ideals (Williams 2002, 231). Cage writes that he finds it unattractive to simply tell other people what to do, wishing activities to be “more social and anarchically so” (Cage 1969, ix–x). Some commentators, such as Charles Junkerman (1994, 40, 44–48), have pushed the point even further by underlining the anticommercial subtexts of Cage’s endeavors.

However, there is no reason to romanticize the musiccircuses or other happenings as utopian spaces of freedom. While leaving the details to the audience, Cage was still the mastermind behind the events, seeking to deliver to the audience not just anything but a certain kind of aesthetic abundance of his own liking (Pritchett 1996, 158). There is no paradox between freedom and control, but instead, there is a predetermined division of labor: the artist invests in the conceptual and material platform upon which people work autonomously, and later appropriates the work by giving it his or her signature. This procedure of harnessing freedom is not a curious exception but a paradigmatic model in contemporary capitalism. As economist Yann Moulier Boutang phrases it:

Entrepreneurial intelligence now consists in knowing how to convert into economic value the wealth that is already present in the virtual space of the digital. This is the definition of the “political” entrepreneur: that is to say, someone who is able to understand social networks and to take them directly as his starting point (like a surfer, who does not create the wave but knows how to catch it at the right moment). (Moulier Boutang 2011, 109)

Conclusions: Reading Capitalism Through Art

In this chapter, I have examined some aspects of the parallel restructuring in art and capitalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. I have analyzed how John Cage's *33 1/3*, as an example of the genre of *happening*, reflects three key shifts in postindustrialization: from the production of material objects to the production of ideas and processes (*ephemerality*), from the concrete organization of contents to the abstract organization of relations (*relationality*), and from the dichotomy between the producer and the consumer to cooperation among the active audience (*coproductivity*). Also, I have argued that it is through this kind of *artistic qualities*, and not through the statistical categories of "cultural industries" or "creative occupations," that we can trace and understand the argument of arts and culture becoming economically valuable for contemporary capitalism. Art is valuable for capitalism in the sense that *capitalism itself has become "artistic."*

My argument, obviously, is not of a causal kind: I do not claim to have shown any kind of a unidirectional relation between historical artistic practices and contemporary economic practices. Still, I hold the belief that artworks are, not merely but *also*, products of their time: they condense and crystallize the symptoms of complex social processes, and also actively participate in these processes by helping to constitute them (Shaviro 2010, 2). Quoting Marshall McLuhan (1964, 70), the artist "picks up the message of cultural and technological challenge decades before its transforming impact occurs." Undoubtedly, this would equally apply to economic challenges.

According to Peter Bürger (1984), historical avant-garde art movements such as Surrealism, Dada, and Situationist International failed because of their inability to fulfill the promise of bridging the gap between art and life. It can be argued that capitalism has succeeded better in this revolutionary objective: in reassembling the social whole of production as a huge artwork. As Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2005) point out, the success of contemporary capitalism was largely driven by the workers' critique toward the alienating, mechanical, and bureaucratic practices of the industrial manufacture. *Artistic critique*, as they call it, sought to

transform production so that the workers could use their unique personal skills and creativity to express themselves in the production process. These demands were later translated into new doctrines of business administration that arose alongside the new regime of *flexible accumulation* (Harvey 1989).

Jeremy Rifkin (2000, 8) portrays cultural production “as the final stage of the capitalist way of life, whose essential mission has always been to bring more and more human activity into the commercial arena [and] to make all relations economic ones.” With no particular intention to subscribe to the dystopian tone of Rifkin’s argument, I have tried to show in this chapter how even the most experimental aspirations of art, such as Cage’s anarchic and antihierarchical experiments, are not only *against* capitalism but also *besides* it, contributing to the concurrent revolutions of art and capitalism.

However, two reservations must be made. First, the flexibility of the mode of production, or the “creativity” of the economy as a whole, does not guarantee more freedom or self-fulfillment at the level of individual jobs. Rather, for the large majority of people working or wanting to work in the cultural and creative sector, the labor market situation is characterized with monotonous jobs, temporary contracts, and overheated competition (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010). Labor precariousness can be seen as an inevitable consequence of the postindustrial reorganization, but it is also a “laboratory of labor politics” (De Peuter 2011) that opens possibilities for collective organizations and policy proposals. Second, not all forms of art can be uniformly, entirely, and easily subsumed into the logics of capital. The parallels that I have suggested point out to a very general homology, not to the adaptation of discrete art forms. In addition, the extent to which the artistic qualities of postmodernism can or cannot be “translated” into the realm of concrete business practices is a matter of empirical inquiry that remains outside the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, it is evident that some of the key tenets, such as trying to maintain a productive balance between freedom and control, are also the main challenges of the current commons-based digital economies.

In the case of John Cage, his anarchist legacy makes it difficult to see him *personally* as a good role model for business practices. As a vocal critic of the lifestyle based on mass consumerism, his diary notes and essays

from the times of $33 \frac{1}{3}$ and beyond are full of remarks on overconsumption, global inequality, and the limits of ecological sustainability. While explicitly detaching his music from politics, in which he expresses “no interest” (Cage 1993, 115), he still laments: “U.S. citizens are six per cent of world’s population consuming sixty per cent of world’s resources. Had Americans been born pigs rather than men, it would not have been different” (Cage 1969, 145).

Characteristic of Cage’s ironic style of writing, the diaries from 1965 to 1966 are even titled “How to Improve the World (You Will Only Make It Worse).” But there is also a brighter side, inspired by a friend and intellectual guide of his, futurist architect Buckminster Fuller, who had comprehensive visions of the world’s ecological restructuring. Cage, too, subscribes to the goal of changing the world for “livingry”—of having the resources of the world “to the service of 100% of humanity at higher standards of living and total enjoyment than any man has yet experienced” (Cage 1969, 164; see also Junkerman 1994).

While it is still a mainstream conception that economy is a kind of hegemonic supersystem, which penetrates and colonizes all other spheres of the life-world, my argument, on the contrary, is that the economy, both as a conceptual system and as a practical form of governance, is thoroughly contaminated by artistic qualities. Just as a performance artist appropriates cultural inputs, recycles and reinterprets them, and finally puts the final product on the stage, the postmodern entrepreneur attempts to capture and manipulate flows of symbols and affects in order to recreate them in a spectacular form that will convert into the accumulation of capital. Voicing this resemblance is not a means of devaluating art, but, on the contrary, an affirmation of its subversive potentials.

Musicologist Charles Hamm once wrote: “I’ve experienced nothing in postmodern art that wasn’t anticipated in the music of John Cage, and I’ve read nothing in postmodern theory and criticism that I haven’t already read in his writings” (Hamm 1995, 384). Translating Hamm’s deep impression and appreciation of Cage’s work for the argument presented in this chapter, I could allude to his statement as follows: I’ve experienced little in postindustrial capitalism that was not anticipated in the art of the 1960s and particularly exemplified in the works of John Cage.

Notes

1. This juxtaposition is discussed by Olav Velthuis (2005b, 24, 183) under the rubric of “Hostile Worlds argument.” This argument basically posits that (1) artistic and economic values are fundamentally incommensurable, and that (2) the contaminating influence of economic forces on the arts is continuously expanding.
2. The report uses an unusual system of page numbering that resembles the time codes commonly attributed to audio and video productions.
3. The aggregate figures given here are calculated by the author from the production data of the statistics, available from US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA 2013).

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3

Neoliberal Marketization of Global Contemporary Visual Art Worlds: Changes in Valuations and the Scope of Local and Global Markets

Kangsan Lee

In Shanghai, on November 9, 2016, a Wednesday afternoon, major art dealers and galleries had come together to prepare their VIP (very important person) sales for the evening when news outlets announced that Donald Trump had been elected president of the United States. Trump succeeded in capturing the majority of the American electoral college votes with a promise, among others, to bring jobs back to the United States; in the eyes of laid-off factory workers in the American Rust Belt, those jobs had disappeared to China (and beyond) over recent decades. What we could observe on that day in Shanghai was not the Chinese factories which benefited from the transfer of jobs from the United States, but large white cubes filled with shiny artwork worth millions of dollars, demonstrating a stunning soft power. Over the next weekend, Shanghai attracted the largest group of international art enthusiasts, as never before, with the two major Chinese fairs, the West Bund Art and Design, and ART021. These global aficionados and elite had come to partake in this major display of China's cultural capital, that is, art.

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For centuries, in the Western art world, “international arts” referred to art produced in other Western countries or produced in non-Western countries but only consumed in the West, such as Aboriginal or African art. The visual arts were conceived as a predominantly Western phenomenon and were valued according to the conventions shared within “the center” (Becker 1982). Although the Western art world heavily dominates the contemporary art market (Buchholz and Wuggenig 2006; Quemin 2006), Asian art markets have become substantially more active in global art markets over the last two decades (Velthuis and Curioni 2016). Asian art markets, which include Chinese, Korean, and Singaporean art markets,¹ have received enormous attention as their values rose in major global contemporary art markets, and are now treated as a part of major art markets. The major art institutions, museums, and galleries opened branches in Asian markets, and based on fine arts auction turnover in 2015, China has become the second-largest global art market, and Korea the tenth largest (Artpice 2016). Figure 3.1 shows graphs of fine arts auction turnover, indicating the rise of the Chinese market, which has been rapid and proportionally large enough to catch people’s attention, both inside and outside the art world.

This chapter addresses the following questions: (a) How could the Asian art market become a large and influential market in the contemporary art world within a relatively short period? (b) Was the rise of the

Fine Art Auction Turnover (2008–2015)

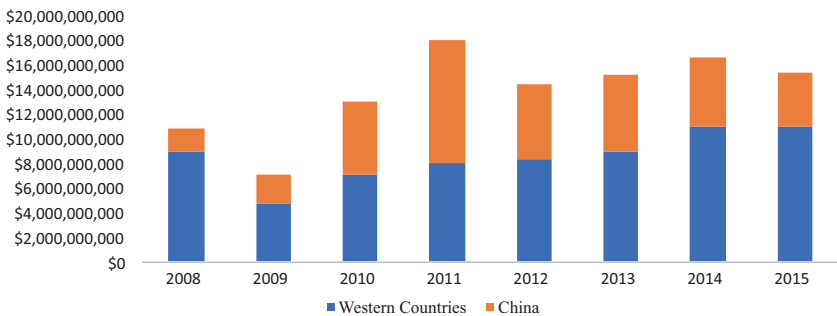


Fig. 3.1 Fine arts auction turnover between Western countries and China for 2008–15 (By Artpice.com/AMMA, https://imgpublic.artprice.com/pdf/rama2016_en.pdf)

Asian art world associated with the transformations of the global economy, that is, due to neoliberal market forces? (c) Would this rapid change in the art marketplace create a distinct shift in the relation between local and global art markets?

In answering these questions, from a systemic perspective in this chapter, I will argue that the global art world is being increasingly penetrated by the norms and practices of the global capitalist economy, that is, neoliberal marketization forces in general. Rather than illustrating the connection between the macroeconomy and the art world, my arguments in this chapter will focus on the mechanisms and practice changes, and show how neoliberal marketization changed the conventional valuations and consumption practices in art markets and created the upsurge in Asian art markets. Furthermore, I will show that neoliberal marketization, through commensuration and financialization, has changed the valuation of art in markets and altered the process of becoming a collector. Marketization has helped the rise of the new art market as the influx of new money from both geographically new markets (i.e., Asian art markets) and a new group of art buyers (i.e., art investors) challenged the key practices of the art world in terms of valuation and consumption.

Among the many new art markets that have emerged recently, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and Korea, this chapter will focus on East Asian art markets for three reasons. First, the growth in local and global markets for Asian artists has created more demand of artwork amongst consumers in those countries, as we can see from Fig. 3.1 and Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Top ten countries by art auction turnover in 2014 and 2015 (By [Artprice.com/AMMA](https://imgpublic.artprice.com/pdf/rama2016_en.pdf), https://imgpublic.artprice.com/pdf/rama2016_en.pdf)

	2014	2015
1	China	USA
2	USA	China
3	UK	UK
4	France	France
5	Germany	Germany
6	Switzerland	Italy
7	Italy	Switzerland
8	Austria	Austria
9	Australia	South Korea
10	South Korea	Australia

Second, the marketization of the Asian art world and the increased interaction with global art markets created more market-based valuation methods available to both audiences in local and global markets, such as art indexes, market reports, databases, and even online apps that provide market details. Third, Asian art markets, however, are still subjected to standards from both local and global markets, although they are highly connected and globalized. These varying standards provide an opportunity to examine how neoliberal marketization functions helped in the rise of Asian art markets without institutional intervention from traditional art world.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first part explains the general tenets of the neoliberal marketization of art worlds, focusing on the commodification and financialization of art markets. The next section examines the market-based practice changes that global art markets have experienced, focusing on the example of Asian art markets. In the second part, I highlight how commensuration and financialization created homogeneous but differentiated art markets and changed the scope of local and global markets.

The Neoliberal Marketization of Art Worlds: Commensuration and Financialization

Art markets have a history as long as art history itself. Traditional markets were often dominated by a group of important collectors or patrons, rather than markets of collective actors and mediators. While the belief of “art for art’s sake” has gradually lost a great deal of its former position in art worlds, the marketization of art worlds has been mainly described and delivered in two aspects, commodification and financialization (Horowitz 2010; Velthuis 2005; Velthuis and Curioni 2016).

According to Arjun Appadurai (2005), commodification is “anything intended for exchange,” or the transformation of goods, services, ideas, and people into commodities, or objects of economic value. Here, I extend this definition as the assignment of economic value, up front, to art not previously considered in those terms, including the transformation

of art worlds into markets based on monetary value. Financialization refers to the increasing importance of finance, financial markets, and institutions to the workings of the economy (Davis and Kim 2015). As Davis and Kim (2015) describe financialization, these forces have shaped patterns of inequality, culture, and social change in the broader society. The influx of money into art markets through financial institutions also brought a broad shift in how capital is intermediated, from artistic institutions to financial institutions, which will be discussed further below. Additionally, the financialization of art worlds involves the transition of capital, both from financial to cultural capital (i.e., buying art with money) and from cultural to financial capital (i.e., charging 0% interest rate for the art loan to VIP collectors in auction houses). These two aspects are often contradictory to the traditional idea of “art for art’s sake” (Becker 1982; Haskell 1980; Velthuis 2011).

Commensuration of Art Markets

The commodification of the modern and contemporary art world occurred not through mass production but through standardization. Although the supply chain of globalization often emphasizes the mass production system as evidence of commodification in markets (Appadurai 1996; Law and Hetherington 2000), the mass production of artworks contradicts the traditional valuation of art and violates the norm of the uniqueness of the artwork (Venäläinen in this book). Art is considered unique and often described as a singular good (Karpik 2010) that is not only hard to evaluate but also hard to commensurate in value. Thus, the recent cultural economics of valuation of artworks has focused on the uniqueness of “art” or “an artist” as a singular good, that is, their hedonic value (Chanel et al. 1996; Renneboog and Spaenjers 2013). In art worlds, mass production has historically been regarded as pejorative (depreciatory) and has been considered as a way of suppressing the value of art, sometimes even being described as an evidence of the end of art (Danto 2014).

Yet, as the other side of commodification, the neoliberal marketization of art worlds has focused on a standardized valuation of artworks in order to facilitate trading.² Among economic and cultural sociologists, the valuation of artworks and artists is often described as a complex and highly path-dependent process, as it incorporates judgments from professional critics, consumers, market mediators, and, of course, the idiosyncratic producer(s) (Velthuis and Curioni 2015). Market valuation was regarded as a mere reflection of professional opinion, rather than an independent appraisal process loosely coupled with expert valuation(s). Due to this complexity, experts with insider knowledge have often driven market valuations by gauging both the current and the potential value of artists and artworks.

Traditionally, the numeric valuation of artworks—the price or ranking—has been very opaque to market actors, including not only collectors and artists, but also some dealers. In the past, the only way to know the real price of an artwork is to buy it or to be an insider in the deal. In galleries, the negotiation would start when a prospective buyer expresses his or her interest in a particular work, then learns the price of the artwork or the price range of the artist, and perhaps finalizes the purchase within a day or longer (Thompson 2008, 2014). For this reason, in traditional art markets, the number of red stickers, which represent a sale in solo shows, symbolizes an artist's success, regardless of how much money the artist actually earned.³ In that traditional framework, buyers aim to possess art as part of their collection, rather viewing acquisitions as an investment, which would involve calculations based on the difference between the acquisition price and the potential selling price.

More recently, the standardized value of artworks through a different type of valuation has emerged that allows art to be viewed as a trade-off good measured by the willingness of potential collectors to “invest” and “sell-off,” rather than viewing art as a nonsubstitutable object. The art world started to provide more numeric forms of valuation in a way that can be understood through the concept of commensuration (Espeland and Sauder 2007), that is, the process of making things comparable so that they may be exchanged using the privileged medium of money (Beckert 2011). For example, standardized accreditation of artistic value

by artists' rankings or by calculations of expected return of art investment provide new dimensions of valuation, which match neoliberal marketization patterns. The commensuration of artistic quality necessarily encompasses professional valuation, but it also started to include market-oriented analytics that had been disregarded by both collectors and art professionals in the past. In this type of market, professional valuation is one of the variables to estimate the value of an artwork, but not necessarily the primary component to decide which work to collect.

The commodification of artworks and artists as a part of neoliberal marketization invites *three* different types of commensurations, which have one clear goal, that is, to quantify the value of the artwork and the intangible characteristics of artists to assist collectors in comparing among alternatives and making their investment decisions.

Marketization starts with broad macro “numbers” to reconceptualize the art world as a collection of art markets, which represents the first type of commensuration. Mei and Moses' Art Index (2002, 2005), which was invented in 2000, is a data-mining art market analytics tool that judges the strength of the art market against other asset classes. This index introduced the new concept of “art as an asset” and changed the perception of an art market fundamentally, opening an opportunity to rate art as an asset that could be compared with other investments, such as stocks, bonds, and commodities. Many institutional actors in the art world—galleries, dealers, and art fund managers—involved in the financialization of art markets have been using this index not only to attract potential investors but also to produce a guideline for art funds and derivatives based on the index. Though art is an illiquid investment, it is often used as a hedge against inflation, as art tends to maintain its value over time.⁴

Other market-level numbers are provided in the form of “market reports.” TEFAF (The European Fine Art Fair) Art Market Report, which was first published in 2008 by Clare McAndrew, founder of the Dublin-based research and consulting firm Arts Economics, is widely regarded as the most comprehensive summary of the art market available. The stated goals of TEFAF are to “cover macroeconomic art market studies, micro-level sector analysis, art banking and investment-related services” (Art Economics 2017), providing many numbers and charts to interpret art as

a marketable entity to be sold to institutional mediators, investors, and collectors.

Many consulting firms, banks, and art associations offer art market reports, and HISCOX, an insurance company, has joined this trend with the HISCOX Online Art Trade Report, an art market analytics report focused solely on the online market. HISCOX is further evidence of how markets and consumers are paying attention to the numbers of this narrowed and specialized market.

The second type of commensuration is focused on the relative position within an art market or across art markets with rankings and price data. Among many online art market information providers, [ArtPrice.com](#), [Artnet.com](#), and [Artfacts.net](#), Blouin Art Info and Index have been used mostly for both commercial uses and academic studies in art worlds and in art markets (Velthuis and Curioni 2016; Ertug et al. 2015; Yogev and Ertug 2016).

Artnet is one of the oldest (founded in 1989) and most comprehensive online art information providers covering the latest news, events, trends, and people in both professional art worlds and global art markets, with a daily newsletter, price database, analytics reports, and market alerts. Artnet provides art auction records and analytics articles on art markets, providing easy-to-digest numbers such as the successful auction bidding prices and rankings of the top 25 Chinese artists or top 50 women collectors globally. These numbers help identify the principal actors in art markets and how much they would pay for artworks. While Artnet provides raw numbers of auction prices to rank artists, the other online services listed above provide more detailed analytics reports on markets. Artprice is a French limited company founded in 1997, based in Lyon, France. Its reports are offered in six different languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Chinese). The company mainly focuses on art market databases, with various markets' and artists' indices, econometrics analyses, and auction records. Though London-based Blouin Art Info and Art Sales Index also provide a set of art market data similar to ArtPrice, they also provide broad news and commentary articles on arts and culture in an online magazine format, with 13 different worldwide national editions similar to Artnet. [Artfacts.net](#), established in 2001, also

offers similar sets of art market data. However, it distinguishes itself from other art market information services by aiming to provide “real statistics” on “trending” artists, as well as longitudinal and locational information using a measure of economic valuation based on audience attention (Franck 1999). Its metrics not only rank artists but help identify how they are connected with each other. These online services provide numbers that delineate the structural order of artists in markets based on either an artist’s price in an auction or relative orders across artists and markets to show artists’ market status with rankings and trending lines. These types of metrics and information were scarce in the past.

The third type of metrics in art markets focuses solely on investment purposes using a strategic approach to art markets, based on the other two macro and micronumbers discussed above. ArtTactic and ArtRank are a new type of art market service corporation, characterized as having an investment goal and specification.⁵ ArtRank is an online service provider that publishes quarterly projections on artists who are relatively undervalued, as it analyzes and allows collectors to make their investment decisions. The firm makes clear that its services are aimed toward investment, rather than collection, stating on its website: “[O]ur algorithm is intent on assessing the intrinsic value of artwork, not its survival value. We do not judge any works’ aesthetic or emotional value” (ArtRank 2016). It also emphasizes how to quantify an artwork’s value and the intangible characteristics of artists, such as gallery representation or major collector support, using an algorithm, rather than professional knowledge.

The three types of metrics provided by the art market corporations discussed here offer assessments on the art market, focusing on market valuation without focusing on the aesthetics of artworks or collectors’ preferences, although the latter often quote a professional’s evaluation when it aligns with the numbers they produce.⁶ I argue that the use of metrics described here contributed to the reshaping art markets. These metrics show that the aggregated numbers used in traditional market analytics in economics have become influential in art markets: actors inside the art world focused more on the detail of art markets to create profits with a new business model.

Financialization of Art Markets

Commensuration not only helped in the commodification of art worlds through the rise of visible art consumption, but also allowed us to think of art as a thing to trade, rather than something with a unique value. These standardized valuations open an opportunity to financialize art-work as an asset, as it provides a common scoring rubric similar to those applied to any other financial market. The imposition of comparable market value complemented nonmarket-related aesthetics, thus indirectly encouraging the marketization of art worlds, although commercialization or commodification, as discussed earlier, is still regarded unfavorably in certain subsections of the art world.⁷

The concept of art investment historically has been considered a less problematic concept, because anticipating an increase in an artwork's value over time is still thought to involve substantial aesthetic taste. Yet the recent creation of art indices and art funds has led to a significant diffusion of the concept of "art as an asset" (Horowitz 2010), which is, in turn, connected to the rise in the financialization of art markets.

Unlike conventional commodification with mass production, which violates the core way of art production and valuation, the opposition of art appreciation and investment is a problem that is extremely hard to distinguish in art acquisition. Art advisory groups suggest that collectors should invest in art not by following their heart (hedonic) but by following the market (Bischoff 2005). The financialization of art markets has benefited from the commensuration of art, as it provides the common metrics of art valuation with which lay audiences and market actors are familiar. For example, Velthuis (2005) emphasizes the rules of price formation in the fine arts market, and Horowitz (2010) details the rise of art related financial derivatives and the investment market as evidence of financialization. It remains difficult to define a clear causal relation between commensuration and financialization, although it is evident that they are inevitably associated with each other and both contribute to the overall marketization of art worlds.

The financialization of the art market accelerated in the 2000s as manifested by the increased number of art funds and derivatives. According to Horowitz (2010), by 2009, 36 art funds had been launched globally, eight of which were non-Western, and these art funds created more channels for money to flow in and out of the market. Art funds provide the benefit of participation in the art market to a wider number of people than ever before, as individuals can now buy and sell shares of a fund. Art funds also bring a much-needed boost of liquidity and transparency to the market. "Art is not, after all, what we thought it was, in the broadest sense it is now hard cash. We shall have mutual funds based on securities in the form of pictures held in a bank vault" (Horowitz 2010, 143).

As the financialization of the art market sheds light on transactions and liquidation of artworks as assets, it has also changed the emphasis of such work from a cultural value to a market value. The rise of art funds helps to strengthen the concept of art investment and the financialization of art markets, as they provide benefits based on market forces. This perspective is often regarded as a significant threat to major gallerists and curators. Despite the uncertainty and risk that historically prevent art from being treated as an investment (Horowitz 2010), art increasingly came to be regarded as an attractive asset to invest, for the following reasons: First, the financialization of art has a low cost of maintenance, which means it does not have to support exhibition space or art shows; all that is needed is a small storage place to maintain the stack of artwork. Freeport Switzerland is an example, consisting of a dark dungeon of masterpieces where many cheap vaults have housed a tremendous number of expensive artworks for decades (Knight 2016). Second, whereas many galleries or collections have a specific orientation or specialization, the collections acquired by art funds function more like as a generalist than a specialist. In traditional galleries, choosing to buy or represent a certain group of artists directly reflects their reputation and their status in the art world, based on cultural valuations. Unlike the conventional gallerist or art dealers, art funds are not limited by specialty, reputation, or status. They can buy any artwork solely for profit, enabling them to buy what many people want. Third, financial markets for art can have greater purchasing power than any single commercial gallery. The average art funds'

size in 2005–09 was approximately USD 105 million, ranging from USD 150,000 to USD 400 million. With larger budgets, these markets can strategize themselves with a buy-and-hold strategy and influence market demands.

The growing linkage between the art market and financial markets received the most attention when global financial markets collapsed in 2008 and 2009. One of the famous episodes that crossed the financial and art markets happened on September 15, 2008. When Lehmann Brothers filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, which remains the largest bankruptcy filing in US history, art by British artist Damien Hirst, sold at Sotheby's (London), broke two records in the art market: Hirst was the first artist to sell brand-new work directly to the public at an auction house, and he broke sales records, selling an unprecedented USD 270 million worth of art. This was big news not just because of the notable success of Damien Hirst but also illustrative of the influx of money into art markets when all other markets were collapsing or freezing. In another example, a week into the disastrous financial crisis of 2008, the Lehman Brothers' art collection safely landed in other rich people's hands with higher-than-expected prices at Christie's New York, despite the gloomy expectation of all scheduled auctions at that time.

Not only was the negative impact of the financial crisis on the art market relatively small, but as the size of the art market grew, it also became a prominent market for lay investors. While the crisis in 2008 and 2009 struck most other previously stable asset markets, investment professionals began talking up the art market for its relatively stability and risk-hedging aspects (Barker 2008). Thus, the crisis invited new monies from other investment vehicles within the Western world. The financialization of the art market has been enhanced after 2008, as it grew more than any other market segment.

One way to track the financialization of art markets in the last few years is by tracking media coverage of art. For example, Fig. 3.2 illustrates how many times the word "art investment" showed up in major global newspapers between 2002 and 2013. The trend shows a general increase in the use of the term in news articles, although there were some peaks and troughs across years.

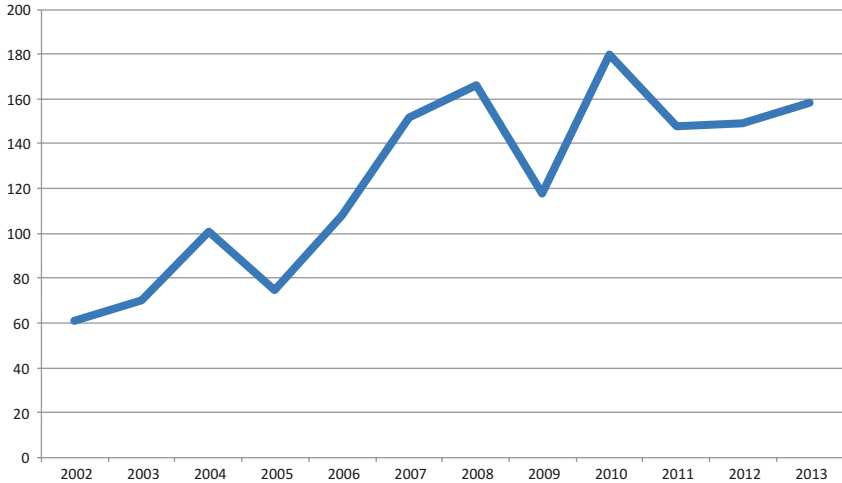


Fig. 3.2 Appearance of the word “art investment” in global newspapers between 2002 and 2013 (By LexusNexis)

Neoliberal Marketization (Commensuration and Financialization) and the Rise of Asian Art Markets

With the rise of new market practices in contemporary art markets, the neoliberal marketization of art markets accelerated and created unprecedentedly rapid market expansion worldwide. Not only did commensuration and financialization play a crucial role in reshaping the conventional art worlds into markets, they also opened up an opportunity for new markets to emerge. The neoliberal marketization of the art world through commensuration and financialization has helped to accelerate the rise of Asian art markets in three ways.

First, the number and size of markets, followed by new market practices, shifted the attention of the art world away from the institutional authority of art professionals. Previously, rich collectors traveled to the centers of the art world, such as New York or London, to buy an expensive artwork and to build social and cultural capital through this experience. Now, marketization invites major institutional actors to come to

local Asian art markets, as shown previously in Table 3.1. With news titles such as “Why London’s Victoria and Albert Museum Is Launching an Outpost in China” (Chow 2016) and “Chinese Billionaire Liu Yiqian Is the Buyer for the Record-Breaking \$170-Million Modigliani Nude” (Cascone 2015), the media repeatedly reported the record-breaking prices in these local markets and highlighted how much money was raised and spent in order to attract art professionals and art market actors. Interested parties could easily access information related to art purchases in Dubai, Shanghai, and Miami. Special reports on Asian art markets by analytics companies, banks, and consulting firms highlight how commensuration emphasizes where the money is, not where the legitimacy or authority lies. The result is an increase in overall attention on Asian art markets raising new opportunities for art investment in these markets, rather than in the traditional centers of the art world. Major art auction houses expanded into these new local markets and continue to be key mediators in these markets. The number of local branches maintained by major art auction houses and by international art fair committees has increased, as these entities expand like multinational corporations. Yogev and Etrug (2016) showed that the rise of Asian art markets was characterized less by the movement of Asian galleries abroad, and more by Western galleries moving to these new markets. They argued that this new flow to the locals is an evidence of the growing strength of the Asian art markets.

As is the case in all new markets, market volatility can be high. Art funds hedge risk by investing in stable masterpieces, and also raise value in contemporary local markets by investing in high-risk and high-return pieces of art. As a result, major art market actors, such as institutional actors in the traditional centers of the art world, travel more for events in new local markets, aiming for new investments, new collectors, and hedging (or arbitraging) opportunities.

Second, commensuration and financialization also increased the visibility of art consumption. The salience of art auctions and art fairs in these new markets was noticeable. The sales at public auctions of fine and decorative art accounted for 47% of the market in 2013 and 40% of World Gallery Art Sales were made at fairs in 2014 (TEFAF 2014, 2015). Auction sales of postwar and contemporary art reached €5.9 billion in

2014, an increase of 19% year on year, and reached its highest ever recorded level, while overall global art market growth, including the dealer sector (dealers, gallery sales, and private sales), was up only by 7% (TEFAF 2015). Thus, commensuration by price and monetary valuation made markets more visible and worthy of media attention (Fig. 3.2), which can lead audiences to evaluate things in nonconventional ways (Fourcade 2011, Espeland and Sauder 2007).

In Asian art markets, market values are a strong barometer of artworks' value to the majority of local audiences because they often lack information based on the professional valuation from the major art world. Thus, this lack of professional valuation information reinforces local market valuations and empowers market actors. As major auction houses and art fairs function like multinational corporations, visible consumption through auctions or fairs has significantly increased (Daniel 2015). These auctions and fairs were often regarded as a low-status practice in the conventional art world (Shin et al. 2014), but as unprecedented, record-breaking prices for artworks were realized in Asian locations, they became more visible in all outlets.

Without much institutional resistance or competition from the primary market,⁸ that is, transactions through commercial galleries, art dealers, and museums, which is due to a lack of museums or galleries, Chinese collectors enjoy the easy access to preselected artworks at auctions and fairs. Evidence suggests that they even prefer to buy artworks in auctions and fairs compared with buying them through galleries or art dealers. According to the ex-executive officer of the Seoul Auction in Hong Kong:

Chinese people love to use auction or fairs to buy an artwork for two reasons. First, they want transparency even if they need to pay more because there are so many fakes, which Chinese do not care much about it unless they happen to buy one for themselves. Because Chinese art market has a shorter history (only started in the late 1990s or early 2000), especially for the contemporary art market, they lack the relationship with the primary market (i.e., commercial galleries or museums) that they can truly rely on, so they depend on the open-bidding system. Second, they love to buy art in front of people to show (off) and prove that they have a taste and the wealth. That's why they choose to buy art in public auctions and fairs than in private through galleries or art dealers. (Interview by author, May 26, 2015)

The tendency for visible consumption in Asian art markets coincided with commensuration and financialization, which introduced more public prices and transactions. This combination reinforced neoliberal marketization, emphasizing market valuation over professional valuation.

Last, neoliberal marketization attracted a new group of art buyers who did not necessarily know or value the conventional aesthetic or cultural standards but were heavily depended on market valuation. In other words, marketization not only increased general attention on new markets with resources, but it also attracted new buyers with little or no experience. During field observations at auction houses in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Paris, London, and New York, I found that there were more bidding wars in Asian art capitals, as compared with their Western counterparts. On average, the Asian auctions were significantly longer. For instance, the Christie's Shanghai Spring Auction lasted almost three-and-a-half hours for 140 lots, longer than the auctions with a similar number of lots in New York and London, which lasted around two hours. A Christie's auctioneer in Hong Kong who came to help in the Shanghai Auction was interviewed, and he explained:

[W]e allow the auctioneers to give more time for a bidding war in Asia and sometimes allow time to provoke (pinch) bidders to start a bidding war. Because Asian collectors are relatively less educated about art markets and they do not prepare their bid in advance and do not limit how much money they would spend, unlike Western bidders who usually come to auction with their mind decided on what to buy and with a very specific range of bidding prices. Thus, more time and more competition in Asian auction often result in higher prices, which we enjoy, and that is perhaps why we see more volatile markets in Asia. (Interview by author, April 24, 2015)

This has been true for both central and local markets. New buyers often join the market for the first time with investment objectives, especially when art markets are expanding rapidly (Shin et al. 2014). According to Christie's Associate Auctioneer in Hong Kong:

Before, we knew nearly 90 percent of people who showed up at auction room, so we could introduce people to others and build a relationship so we understand their interests and educate them about the new trends of a

market. However, nowadays, we barely know half of people who would show up and sometimes it is so embarrassing to have to ask their name and address after a collector buys a half million dollars of artwork. And it is sometimes really hard to predict where they are from and when they would come back. They do not depend on relationships like in the old days; they shop like they buy Hermes or Gucci because art has price tag now. (Interview by author, April 25, 2015)

Also, Georgina Adam (2014) highlights the difference in bidding when describing the sale of a Francis Bacon work at Christie's New York:

[A]s the Bacon came up: "Let's start this at \$80 million," he said: seven bidders jumped in, some in the room, others bidding through Christie's staffers on telephones. The increments – the amounts by which the bids were increased – were going in multiples of \$5 million; at \$100 million, a 23-year-old Korean, Hong Gyu Shin, raised his paddle. Super-dealer Gagosian pulled out after \$105 million. (Adam 2014, 11)

Conventionally, the high uncertainty of art's value and of the valuation process should prevent new consumers (collectors) from joining art markets, although they have enough wealth. This reflects the distinction between cultural and economic capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1986). Bourdieu argued that cultural capital is achieved by life experience and education to distinguish the group of people who share the same values from those who cannot understand the value of high culture. For this reason, rich collectors used to travel to New York or London to meet qualified art professionals and other collectors to learn the value of art and earn the cultural capital to consume art.

However, as commensuration and financialization emphasized the art-as-asset approach, investment return emerged as the dominant criterion of good taste in Asian art markets. As art markets expanded and more analytics tools became available, actors in the art world have become less dependent on social capital or cultural capital based on expert relationships. Instead, they have become more attentive to what other people are buying and how much they pay for it. This perspective serves not only to enhance their own cultural status or identity, but also to gain financial returns (a monetary incentive). Mediators such as auction houses and art

fairs reinforce these emerging trends by providing new services to promote art sales emphasizing expected returns, including guaranteed loans and mortgages on art purchases. As a result, commensuration significantly reduces the cultural expertise necessary to become an art collector, allowing the rise of Asian art markets without many Western-based, qualified art professionals/experts to guide Asian collectors.

Another incident observed at Christie's Shanghai in spring 2015 highlights the new collectors' distinctness. The new collectors in China are less dependent on professional valuation and relationships with experts, and this may also have implications for observing the art world's established rules and norms:

As I was sitting in the back row of bidding room, I could see who was coming and leaving as the auction proceeded. The auction was smooth but relatively slower-paced compared to other auctions in New York or London. I could witness many bidding wars and applause followed by the final bidding. About 30 minutes later, two young men wearing jeans and one woman wearing exercise clothes, sneakers, and a Chanel bag entered the room and sat in the row in front of me. They sat there for 15 minutes, chuckling and whispering to each other. One of the men started to bid, and it went competitively with another other man sitting three rows in front of me wearing a sports jumper and carrying a black vinyl bag. Throughout the rally, one of the young men in jeans let his female companion bid for fun, and they finally got the piece for about \$70 000. They looked like they had fun and were happy at that moment, but left the room about 10 minutes after they bought the work. (Field notes by author, April 24, 2015)

When I asked the auctioneers if they knew who the kids were, they said that they only knew that the man with the vinyl bag was the owner of a big gallery in Shanghai, and that he came often to buy artworks for himself and his clients, although he does not wear conventional clothing like other curators or art dealers. They added that they encountered this kind of situation quite often nowadays.

As the case of Basel Art Hong Kong, below, illustrates, the reduced dependence on professional relationships extends to the recent rise of art fairs. The Associate Coordinator of Art Basel Hong Kong described:

It is totally different from the period when the museum director traveled the world with collectors to buy an art. Nowadays, we invite all the VVIP (Very Very Important Person) collectors to our fair. Of course, we value all the relations with our clients but we can baby-sit everyone at the same time: in Basel, Hong Kong, or Miami. We do care more if the collector is here at our fair for the first time. We plan for them to have a preview tour and explain how the bidding works and which events to join. I think Asian collectors are needier and less independent in general, but it is also changing every year. It is important to create right mood and competition among collectors, and that's why we give out free champagne a lot for the VVIP preview right before the art fair starts. Once they meet other people at social events with champagne glasses, they no longer depend on us but they become a part of an enthusiastic hunting group, focused on the art. That's why we often put champagne or the drink social right before the VVIP preview to add more energy hinted from alcohol. (Interview by author, May 13, 2015)

The rise of Asian art markets and the importance of their art market actors have been supported by neoliberal marketization in three ways, as explained above. As more art market attention shifted toward where the money is, that is, Asian markets, this trend reinforced the market valuation and empowered market actors in these markets. The commensuration aspect delivers numbers and information for new collectors to depend on, instead of professional valuations or cultural relationships, which they lack. As the success story of investments disseminates into art markets, especially in these rising new markets, financialization trends support the purchase of artworks for investment purposes solely, a trend that has been reinforced and legitimated by marketization.

Changes in the art world's influential actors suggest a correlation between the growing influence of Asian art market actors and the overall increase in market actors over time. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show the proportion of Asian art markets and *market actors* (art fair organizers, art auctioneers, and collectors) in the Power 100 list by ArtReview between 2002 and 2016, which lists the most influential people in art worlds, including museum directors, curators, dealers, art fairs, auction houses, collectors, and artists. As we would expect from the examples above, Asian art market actors became more influential in the art market over time as the number of market actors increased.

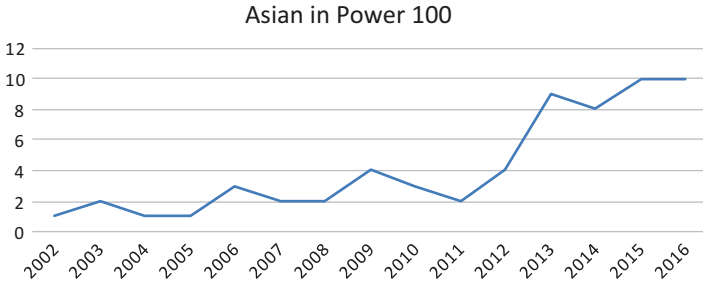


Fig. 3.3 Number of Asian in the Power 100 list by ArtReview.com

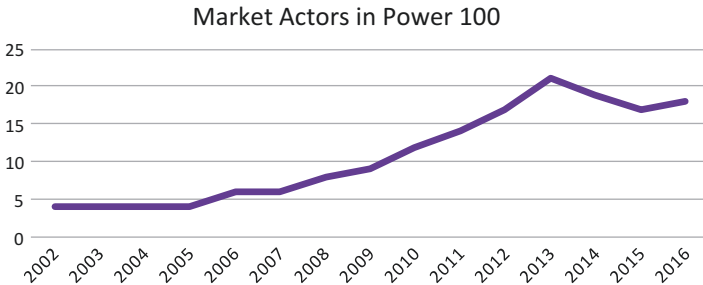


Fig. 3.4 Number of market actors (art fair organizers, art auctioneers, and collectors) in the Power 100 list by ArtReview.com

Neoliberal Marketization and the New Constellation Between Local and Global Art Markets

Neoliberal marketization through commensuration and financialization has helped the rise of Asian art markets as the influx of new money from both geographically new markets (i.e., Asian art markets) and a new group of art buyers (i.e., art investors) challenged the key practices of the art world in terms of valuation and consumption. In addition to this direct linkage between market practice changes and the rise of Asian art markets, commensuration and financialization also contributed to the new constellation between local and global market relations, which accelerated the rise of Asian markets. As more local markets arise as “finan-

cially” or “commercially” important art markets and are included in global art markets, the concepts of the local and the global also shift dynamically. As more money flowed into Asian art markets, the global recognition of local Asian artists has shifted gradually, and their artworks have achieved a significant market status. In short, the adoption of neoliberalization market practices in art markets and the rise of Asian art markets have coevolved, reestablishing the relationship between local and global markets, and between Asian and major Western art markets.

According to cultural globalization theories (Appadurai 1988; Bourdieu 1983; Crane et al. 2002), the local market is either a receptive market or a unique/authentic market. Cultural globalization entails “the transmission or diffusion across national borders of various forms of media and the arts” (Crane et al. 2002, 1) and assumes that the rise of a new local market is part of a process to be nested in global markets. The term “cultural flow” refers to the transmission of cultural phenomena between producers and consumers of culture (Held et al. 1999). The cultural imperialism model claims that there are “unequal cultural flows, with more work heading from the center to periphery than vice versa” (Janssen et al. 2008). According to the cultural imperialism and global habitus approach (Bourdieu 1983, 1986; Crane et al. 2002; Buchholz 2016), norms and values are created at the center of global markets and flow from the center to the periphery; thus, local markets eventually become homogenous with the center. In this framework, influence is one-directional: from the center to the periphery, and from Western (European) society to non-Western worlds, which become integrated into the center, thus creating a homogenous art market.

On the contrary, the cultural flow or network model argues that globalized culture does not simply mean Westernization, nor does culture transfer in a linear, unidirectional flow. Rather, there is a counterflow of cultural influence from the local to the center (Appadurai 1996), which indicates a process in which cultural influences move in various ways. The counterflow of cultural influence has been also studied as the “globalization” process by Griswold (2008) and Tomlinson (1999). The involvement of local actors in global transformation contributes to the transnational flow of ideas. While cultural globalization, especially the cultural imperialism and global field theories, focuses on the

homogeneity of cultural fields (including markets), the cultural flow model highlights the distinction between local and global or among local fields.

As most cultural globalization theories would expect, neoliberal marketization increased the homogeneous consumption of artworks and artists across different markets. Figure 3.5 shows the most overlapped artists sold in auctions across six countries, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany China, and Korea, during 2000–15. As shown in the figure, the top 18 living contemporary artists in each market share similar popularity during recent years. According to cultural imperialism, homogeneity should flow from the center to the periphery, not in the other direction. Thus, a homogenous group of artists should diffuse from the West to the East over time.

However, although the general homogeneity across markets increased, the visibility of local market actors in central art markets and the importance of local art markets also increased. This is similar to the cultural flow model, which offers an alternative conception of the diffusion process, where influences do not necessarily originate in the same place or flow in the same direction. Although the original arguments of the cultural flow model highlighted distinctions across different parts of the world, I argue that neoliberal marketization creates homogeneous markets focused on a similar set of artists and artworks regardless of location in the West or the East. Connecting audiences through commensuration and financialization, the homogenization of cultural consumption emphasized transnational standards over local authenticity. In terms of market valuation, the local–global distinction becomes vague. The value hierarchy was much clearer when it was arranged by strong institutional orders, rather than when complemented by market orders.

It is not difficult to find representative examples of Asian artists who enjoy homogenous markets where they can easily diffuse their success. For example, there are two successful Asian artists, Do-ho Suh and Zeng Fanzhi, Korean and Chinese, respectively, who had divergent career paths but eventually found similar success across markets in the later stages of their careers. Suh has a typical global career path: he graduated from Yale and Rhode Island Design School, received the Hermes artist award, and is promoted by Lehmann Maupin Gallery. Zeng has had very localized

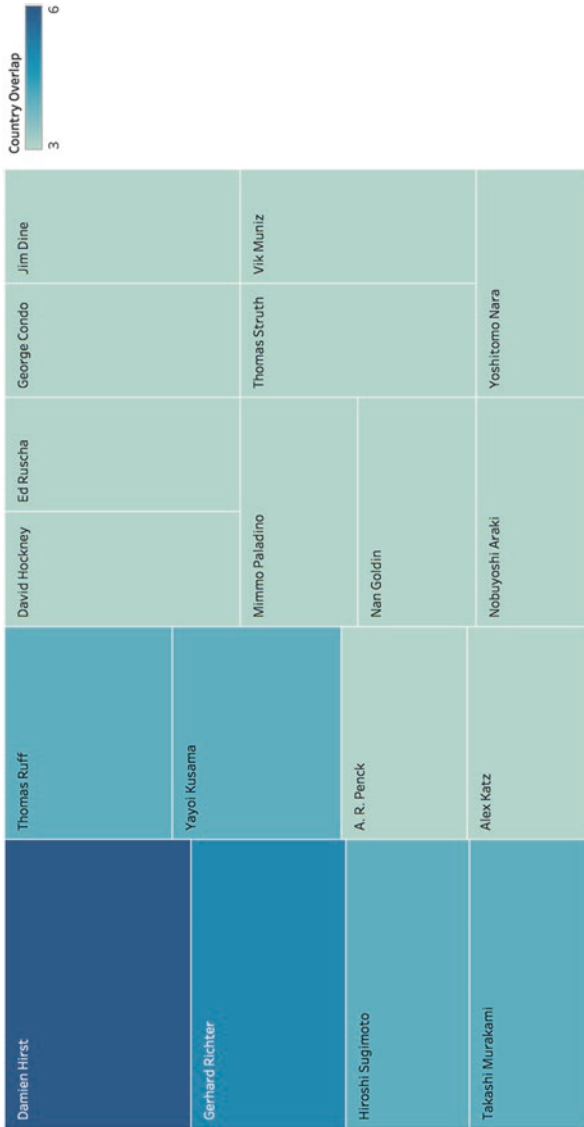


Fig. 3.5 Most overlapped artists across six countries (UK, USA, France, Germany, China, and Korea)

training and career path, being educated and working in China. According to cultural imperialism, *ceteris paribus*, Suh should be more successful in diffusing his success from the West to other markets. However, they both have enjoyed transferable success across markets, regardless of their market specificity to the West or the East in their early careers.

Yet the distinction between local and global markets still persists despite the increased connectivity caused by marketization. While the cultural flow model explains how markets became homogenous during neoliberal marketization, distinctive outcomes across markets reside in the asymmetric connectivity of professionals and market actors across different countries. While market connectivity increased in terms of visible consumptions across markets, the professionals in global art cities remained local and developed their global community relatively slowly due to a lack of resources.

The discrepant valuations between art markets and professional art worlds are often regarded as a temporal problem caused by information asymmetry between experts and lay audiences, which will be resolved eventually through multiple rounds of education or transactions (Shin et al. 2014). Art professionals typically prefer to promote undervalued artists or to discover new artistic value in order to raise or maintain their reputation (Shin et al. 2014), in contrast to market actors, who often invest in established artists.

The sudden increase in market size and market forces created a dichotomized valuation of art between professionals and market actors. Thus, during the rapid expansion of a new market, the aesthetic valuation of artists in the field of art professionals is often likely to contradict their commercial valuation in the large-scale field of art auctions. Although the extent to which this inconsistency persists over time is testable question and needs further examination, it is suggestive that the rise of Asian art markets does not conform to the conventional model of center-periphery cultural flow. Marketization has allowed the Asian market to be a major influence in the global market.

To illustrate, there are two Asian artists who have experienced this inconsistent market success trajectory. Artists Zhang Xiaogang and Kyoung Tack Hong had very similar backgrounds as local Asian artists in

the 1990s and 2000s, having been educated and spending the majority of their careers only in their home country (China and South Korea, respectively). Until the 1990s, they were both very low status in their local markets, yet by the mid-2000s, both had achieved success in international markets. However, they started to have different market success trajectories after their international success. While Zhang would enjoy gradual price increases in auction houses across all markets, Hong suffered from discrepant market success between the Korean and international markets. Although Hong also received great attention from the international market in the early 2000s and sustained his success there, his success did not translate to the Korean market.⁹ This case complicates Bourdieu's perspective on cultural globalization, which assumes the integration of the local market into the global and a one-directional value flow from the core to the periphery.

In short, on the one hand, the neoliberal marketization of the global art worlds tends to foster homogenization of taste across major Western art markets and new rising markets by reducing market uncertainty and information asymmetry across markets. As a result, the discrepancy between local and global art consumption decreases, as both local and global consumers (or collectors) purchase similar lines of artwork. In other words, a similar set of art mediators promotes similar sets of artists in both Western and Asian markets, for different audiences.

On the other hand, however, the variation in certain artists' success across markets persists. The circulation of artworks across markets and the artistic selection of artists in art worlds become separate as different markets arise. The inclusion of distinctive local producers increased the diversity and geographical variation on the production side, as more lines of artworks (i.e., Chinese ink or Korean monochrome) were included in global markets. However, this also has the effect of increasing ambiguity as more heterogeneous producers are introduced, in addition to increasing the discrepancy between professionals and market actors in different markets, which has the unintended consequence of erasing conventional (hierarchical) distinctions between the center and the periphery.

Conclusion

The expansion of the Asian art markets is still in progress on both the producer and the audience side as the interaction between the local and the global market continues to increase and markets encroach on one another (Adam 2014). Neoliberal marketization has helped the rise of Asian art markets through commensuration and financialization. As a result, the relationship between local and global markets has shifted away from its previous form in the art world. Commensuration and financialization redistributed the attention of the art world from professionals to markets, increased the visibility of art consumption, and attracted a new group of buyers who lack institutional knowledge and carry different goals in art buying. The connectivity across Asian and major Western art markets increased, as local market actors became more visible in central markets and market activities in local markets proliferated. As a result, not only did the Asian art markets grow in size and influence but it also challenges the conventional framework of local–global connection.

The rise of Asian art markets is an exceptional opportunity to observe the engagement of local with global cultural markets, as each of the regions originally constituted their own cultural taste and hierarchy but began to interact more through market relations. I examine the rise of Asian art markets as a market dynamic rather than as a cultural process, which would focus on power dynamics across different cultural settings (Bourdieu 1984, Tomlinson 1999; Crane et al. 2002). Although the same changes could be interpreted as a cultural process or part of a cultural reconfiguration (Bourdieu 1983; Buchholz 2016), the rise of Asian art markets occurred without disruptive changes in political or cultural values in those art markets.

Some related questions arise with the findings in this chapter. The art world has been described as a status-based field with multiple boundaries, such as regional, professional, cultural, and market boundaries, which often create a discrepant status ordering of artists due to the quality-related uncertainty of artworks and the complex valuation process (Velthuis 2005; Beckert and Aspers 2011). The recent Asian art market expansion

has blurred these boundaries, especially market boundaries, as the global art market now includes more artists and buyers from Asia.

While previous theories of cultural imperialism and economic globalization often assume one-directional connection from the center to the periphery, the current chapter illustrates a rugged landscape of multiple centers—both institutional and market oriented. For instance, as the conventional institutional hierarchy faded, the new market hierarchy is shared but only on a limited basis. How do original status structures from each market shape artists' success in markets that are connected but not fully integrated? In this rugged landscape, how and why some artists and not others have market success across boundaries deserves further study, as cultural differences or one-directional flow from Western to non-Western countries is not sufficient as an explanation (Hofstede 1980; Stigler and Becker 1977). Neoliberal marketization created more interactions across art worlds through markets, and these interactions created unconventional opportunities for artists to succeed in different markets. The relationship of artists' success across markets should be studied further in order to understand the dynamics of the market and cultural worlds of global contemporary art markets.

Last, and ironically, the marketization of artworks may end up threatening the value of prestige that makes art a coveted asset. Practices of market-oriented collection may create a skewed understanding of art history. For instance, Uli Sig, one of the most influential collectors of Chinese contemporary art, has worried about the biased tastes of Chinese contemporary art collectors (Interview by author, January 30, 2016). As a major collector of Chinese modern and contemporary art from the 1980s, he believes that there are many important artists and artworks ignored by the current Chinese and global art markets. He aims to donate his full collection to an art museum in order to provide a fuller history of Chinese contemporary art, which has been forgotten in current art markets. However, it remains an empirical question whether marketization will eventually change conventional and professional valuation processes according to market valuation logics, or whether market valuation will modify itself to maintain conventional prestige values.

Notes

1. According to an interview with Bae, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Christie's Seoul, Korean collectors were the only ones among Asian countries who bought major contemporary artworks since the 1980s, such as early Roy Lichtenstein or Gerhard Richter's works, while Japanese collectors, mostly corporate collectors, were mostly focusing on Impressionism and modern art instead of contemporary arts. Also, the Japanese art market had suffered from the country's economic stagnation from 1990s on and remained subdued, and did not become a player in the emerging global art market expansion.
2. Many art museums and art-gift companies once tried the mass production of old-masters' works and focused on developing better quality of reprinting, including three-dimensional printing. However, this effort in mass production has waned, as it manipulates the value of original works.
3. Sometimes, it also occurs regardless of the price range of the artist.
4. The Mei and Moses database of art indices was acquired by Sotheby's, a multinational international art broker, on October 27, 2016.
5. ArtTactic's stated goal is "a progressive art market analysis firm that offers dynamic and bespoke market intelligence on the fast-paced and ever-changing global art market" (ArtTactic 2016 website: <https://arttactic.com/about-us/>).
6. This was why, initially, some art professionals raised questions about the reliability of the numbers as these were often derived from scientific measures and also operationalized concepts including commensuration, which is new to the art world. However, the data and the reports produced from these service providers are now regarded as an important source to assess art markets and their trends. Nowadays, even galleries and artists regularly check the databases and update their own information on these websites because they know collectors, curators, and dealers are checking these websites. Also, as part of my pilot research, I collected information about 50 randomly chosen artists from their websites and checked how much their information varied across different service providers. The result was very similar, especially on their market outcomes and success, while these outlets might have different foci on artistic achievements indicating that they had additional and proprietary information on exhibitions or acquisitions.

7. Shin et al. (2014) empirically showed the contrasting views between market and artistic value, especially during the time of rapid market expansion. This is partly due to the fact that art professionals highly value the discovery or rediscovery of an underestimated artist than the adding value to an already famous artist.
8. Primary market indicates the galleries, art dealers, and museums where the artworks are sold for the first time, and secondary markets, often called auctions and fairs, are where the secondary sales from collectors also occur.
9. According to Yeon-Hwa Joo, a formal chief curator at the Hyundai Gallery Seoul, the pricing mechanism in Korea does not exactly reflect auction success as a source of market status the way that the international markets do. Korean collectors discount the temporal and extreme success in auctions based on the experience of traditional “ho” pricing, the standardized pricing system, and the seniority valuation, a similar concept known as deferred success of artwork (Becker 1982). Collectors often pull the extraordinary or exceptional success down to average levels. She explains: “Artists should not depend on the highest price in auction to set their pricing strategy because Korean collectors and galleries still believe in the standardized pricing system; so even if the artist tries to raise the price of his/her artwork because of auction results, the audience would accept only the general and incremental price increase patterns.”

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4

Art, Capitalist Markets, and Society: Insights and Reflections on Contemporary Art

Ilaria Riccioni

Introduction

How can culture be “formative” in contemporary society? To which extent do the markets influence art production and creativity in art? Is it true that art is nowadays merely the result of a managed cultural project? Can the artist really become a “worker” inside the capitalist cultural machine, or is there still a difference between artistic creation and the industrial–capitalist creation of art? In answering these questions, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines a shift from the so-called direct commission to the modern and contemporary art markets, and explores how art and the concept of art transformed along this shift. In the second part, some examples will be discussed in order to give an idea of different kinds of artistic production and to present a tentative typology of artistic production.

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Antonin Artaud had no doubt that Western culture was already, by the early twentieth century, slowly losing its vitality because of the transformation of cultural entities into economic goods. This had disastrous consequences for the formation of ways of thinking, as well as for human relationships in society. Similarly, Georg Simmel, in *Philosophie des Geldes* (1900), described how new forms of urbanization were shaping “objective culture” and causing widespread social anomie. In this case, all avant-garde art presents the same dilemma: the artists’ intimate wish for a “total art,” some sort of pure art, on the one hand, and, on the other, their strong desire and need to be deeply rooted in their own time and to become recognized by the markets. In this way, they would achieve economic autonomy through their works of art. Unfortunately, as a result of a social and economic tendency observed, among others, by Richard Sennet (1999, 13–37), the more modernity loses traditional forms of relations (in this case the previous relationship between artist and commissioner, such as the church, court, wealthy bourgeoisie, nobility), the more individuality develops. If the merchant of art is the intermediary between the young artist, aiming at visibility, and the markets, it is very likely that her or his influence can change the natural flow of creativity into a more market-based production, and this rational orientation of creativity toward market trends can be an intermediary phase leading to a more economic-bound production. This entails the kind of serial production and organization of art in which creative work is merely peripheral. The production of art becomes a totally organized and market-based process comparable to any other industrial process.

Avant-garde art is the perfect example of art that has a further goal than merely to “be art.” It is an effort by artistic sensitivity to push human knowledge far beyond the confines of common sense. The avant-garde art of the twentieth century is a turning point in the meaning of art in industrial society, but it is not only, as Jean Baudrillard (1970, 53–75) says, the beginning of the theatrical age and of simulacra, or, as Walter Benjamin (1966, 17–56) maintains, the beginning of the loss of the aura of art. Art, once confined to the aesthetic domain, for the first time consciously and intentionally attempted to play an active role in the sphere of social life and politics. Avant-garde art has been considered by many critics and social scientists from different historical periods (from contemporary to

postmodern), from Renato Poggioli to Peter Bürger, from Karel Teige to Antonio Gramsci, and from Pierre Francastel to Jean Claire.¹ Instead of commenting on this theoretical tradition, I will discuss cases of avant-garde and contemporary art in which the artist takes an active role in the market-oriented cultural production.

If the beginning of the process of cultural economization showed a possible new function of art within society, the further development of contemporary art poses many questions. To which extent can an artist be influenced by the markets? Are the markets orienting art and creativity, or is it possible that art itself states its own value on the markets in terms of quality and talent? Where is the point of no return at which the artist finally loses her or his autonomy of creation and becomes a totally market-oriented “worker”?

To what extent do culture and art preserve their national characteristics in the contemporary process of global capitalism and, even more pressingly, in the European community, which slowly, but surely, orients toward a shared cultural belonging? “The research of national identity in arts doesn’t make sense [...] simply because artists and art itself does not share the same (National) boundaries,” writes Mariselda Tessarolo (2008), and this is especially true because art does not share administrative and legal boundaries. No doubt, since the late eighteenth century, art has been instrumental in the building of national cultures. Simultaneously, however, art has succeeded in overcoming contingent national and political situations.

A number of examples are present in the history of art from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when cities became centers for cultural exchange and creation, the sort of cities perfectly resounding the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, such as Paris and Weimar in the early nineteenth century, but also Florence, Rome, and Venice during the *Rinascimento* (between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries), New York after the Second World War for modern art and Berlin for contemporary art. Historically, the flourishing of art and artistic development seems to follow trends, fully developed in centers of cultural innovation. However, politics and the gross domestic product (GDP) of countries also have as strong influence on art, as on the markets themselves and on the development of creativity and visibility on an international scale. According to

Diana Crane (1997, 2009), a theory of European culture can probably give more space to the criteria of cultural dissemination and growth, in which culture can have a certain position inside society depending on its media. The logic of disseminating culture is therefore strictly connected and influenced by its content, as well as by the amount of identity symbols it conveys.

Art is part of culture, it shares the same spheres of action, and it is strictly connected to some of the national belonging symbols, in one way or another. Is it even possible to assume that art and culture share the same Weberian “motivation” for their social actions? If art can be considered as a particular kind of social action, as, for example, avant-garde art, which had both a declared and a nondeclared social function, then this function differs from that of the rest of culture. While culture consists of collectively shared practices, ways of thinking, and traditions, art opens ways to new relations between action, taste, and social structure. In this way, it combines in novel ways values and dispositions in order to elicit new attitudes and understandings of reality.

The Beginning of a New Era

Already by the early twentieth century, with the historical avant-garde, the relationship between art and the markets in Europe began to shape all modern art in a completely new way. On the one hand, there was still the romantic vision of artists who end their days in extreme poverty, illness, and solitude, while on the other hand, the first experiments in industrial art were realized. One of the most interesting of these experiments in Italy was the work of Fortunato Depero (1892–1960), a talented artist from Fondo in Trentino who met Giacomo Balla (1871–1958) in Rome for the first time in 1914 and then officially joined the futurist movement in 1915, signing, together with Balla, the *Manifesto of the Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe*, where the plastic dynamic movement becomes the new subject that will establish the turning point of Futurism.

From the position of the observer, in the futurist manifesto art assumes the shape of life itself, elaborating and showing a new path for cultural development. By May 1915, Italy was to enter the war and Balla and

Depero had published a couple of months before, in March, their manifesto. In Depero's writings and works, the obsession for money is a *leit-motiv* throughout his production. He was the first, and only, artist in the futurist movement to develop artistic ideas for products such as pillows, tapestries, and lampshades, to be produced on a limited industrial scale. His work anticipated the emergence of design as an artistic idea according to which the serial production of art for the markets makes it functional in everyday life. Hence, it transformed an original artistic idea that would traditionally have resulted in a unique artwork into an item of mass production, thus multiplying the possibility of selling the object. Publicity was, for Depero, the new art of modern times, a mixture of artistic ideas and the new techniques of expression fostered by industrial-capitalist logic.

An interesting consideration of the changing relationship between art and the markets, as well as its consequences for artistic attitudes, was critically described by Depero after his short stay in Paris, between 1925 and 1926: "1923 is the beginning of a new atmosphere and a new, a third artistic sector."² This new third sector signals an altered relationship between the economy and the art world. The new independent art that is "on the markets" opens a new outlet for items of art which are quoted, as in a stock exchange, according to a "quota." Because of the quick success and fame of the avant-garde artists, some works acquired "bearer value," as any stock exchange investment (Riccioni 2006a, 104).³ According to Depero, the passionate fight of avant-garde art for freedom of expression and against social constraints had turned into a circus act, a ridiculous repetition of empty expressions, once called experimental art, now totally seduced by the markets.

Avant-garde affirms an ideology of freedom, and, as such, its first reaction was a firm denial of capitalistic exploitation of art and artistic processes. However, as Depero also experienced, the reaction of the avant-garde was destined to be neutralized and reduced to a market item, a symbol of its own struggle. The more art aims to be visible and have an impact on society, the more it runs the risk of becoming defined by the capitalist logic. Within this vicious circle, to be visible in modern industrial society means to be widespread and known on a large scale, and it is impossible to achieve such visibility without subscribing to market logic.

However, once avant-garde art subscribes to this logic, the creative push that characterizes its energy is doomed to become quasi-critique, neutralizing its “revolutionary” meaning, turning into shows, goods, furniture, fashion, and status symbol⁴ (Poli 1975, 40). Today, we might well say that things seem to have ultimately developed in the direction of the worst nightmare avant-garde could ever have envisaged.

The relationship between art and the markets in a capitalist society causes an inevitable end to the kind of art that is not market oriented and does not strive for success by relinquishing free creativity and the adoption of an instrumental kind of creativity demanded by the markets. At a general level, in the market-oriented capitalist society, art could, in principle, at the same time be

1. an expression of an original insight;
2. a status-symbol item for sale within the markets;
3. a fulfillment of a broader project of which art is only a part and the artist himself merely a “worker” for ideas that others will develop on the markets; and
4. an ultimate step of a business network for market goods (objects which are merely goods, but the signature on them by an artist turns this production into a unique one, as, for example, the production of bags for the French Mode Maison Louis Vuitton by the well-known Japanese artist and sculptor Takashi Murakami).

As for contemporary art, the relation between art and the markets has been interestingly examined by an American sociologist, Barbara Rosenblum, in the essay “Artists, Alienation and the Market,”⁵ in which she applies the concept of alienation to art. In the essay, the Marxist concept of *alienation* is principally applied to the second part of the artistic process, in which the exchange value of a work of art is defined and the artwork is distributed and consumed. The artist has little to do with this process. Thus, the concept of alienation refers to the lack of power of the artist in the face of the “dealership system” (Poli 1999) that actually decides and fixes the rules. According to Rosenblum, there are few possibilities for the artist to influence the rules of the markets, and all seem

to point to an increasing alienation of the artist from her or his work. “In order to get into the system, artists have to be represented by a merchant or a gallery,” which could mean, in the long run, to accomplish the request of the gallery or its style in order to remain within its interest (Rosenblum in Poli 1999, 169).

Rosenblum identifies a second aspect leading to the artist’s alienation: the impossibility to control the works of art once they have been sold. In other words, the fact that a work of art can be placed in inadequate places or installed in a way that is against the aesthetic integrity of the artist’s original concept can also create a sense of alienation that detaches the artist from what is created, as if the artist’s “spiritual ownership” of the work could be harmed by the economic ownership of the buyer. In the end, this can also decide the mode in which the installation has to be realized, thereby usurping some of the decisions the artist should direct.

A recent example of this phenomenon is a new complex of congress and cultural centers projected in Rome by Massimiliano Fuksass (born 1944), the so-called *Cloud* in the quarter of EUR (*Esposizione Universale Roma*) in Rome. The funding of the architectural project has been shrinking increasingly, with the result that the works are modified and have slowed down significantly, and Fuksass himself has declared the wish to withdraw his name from the work, as it has been carried on, from a certain point, with other criteria and modifications he would never wish to put his name to. Besides artists’ moods, this is a clear example of how the work of art itself, once on the market, tends to become something else than a value in itself and loses its own mode of operation. As a result, the work becomes an indistinct piece of market industry, with its rules, luxury, and misery.

A third step of possible alienation is market success. Once an artist becomes famous for a certain object, concept, or idea, the markets tend to ask for continuous repetition of the successful item or concept, thus creating a crystallization of creativity in favor of the market logic. Once one concept is very successful, the markets celebrate the artist for this, creating a golden cage in which the artist can come to be worshipped by the market dynamics and earn conspicuous amounts of money, but it interrupts the path of experimenting with new expressive adventures. The

axis between creativity and marginality seems, then, to be reinforced as the creative processes enabled by experimenting with new ideas are inhibited by the market's request for repetitive successful creation.

According to Rosenblum, the artistic essence resides in the need for creation, which may entail a market success. However, once this occurs, success can harm creativity itself because it is a process that needs the condition of potentiality, which manifests in experimentation and imagination. Once potentiality has been actualized, the artist needs to start anew. In other words, creativity is this special spiritual quality that can change the way we look at things, thus reinventing the world and our ways of signifying it. On the other hand, if precariousness is a condition of creativity, it is also a state of unbearable suffering and instability that seems to belong to the old concept of the artist *maudit*. This notion hardly applies to the current pragmatic star system of contemporary art.

When artists enter the art markets and try to please the expectations of the dealership system, they have to adjust themselves to the rules of the system. This, in turn, increases the homogenization of art. When the artists succeed in changing the expectations of the markets, they can indeed be called innovative and genial. However, probably, most artists abandon their precarious, experimental, and marginal way of creating works of art and enter the repetitive play of the markets. Examples of these considerations can be found in the Venice Biennale, which is constantly producing comments on and doubts about contemporary art and its distance from people. In contrast are the numerous fairs and galleries spread everywhere in the country, sometimes with a narrow sense of art but with a good sense of the markets.

Following the considerations presented above, a typology of artistic action can be constructed, at least in a preliminary way, as follows:

1. The "pure" artist: the idea of art without significant markets (so-called pure art). This type is possible only in a situation in which the patron or, later, the state provides a subsidy for the artist.
2. The artist-artisan: the artistic production of art as an artisan, eventually modified on a wider scale, such as the art of Depero, or design in general; the Alessi firm, for example, which works with architects and designers such as Portoghesi, Fuksass, Munari, and Starck.

3. The reproduction of the artistic product for mass markets: this type of art can easily be reproduced without an original idea. The production reacts sensitively to the taste of the consumers and the fluctuations of the markets.
4. The “aspirant” artist who can pay for the entire process of visibility organized by an art management, which provides a full package, from the exhibition place, to the organization, and to the art critique as well. In Italy, there is an emerging market in the arts: a few initiatives such as full packages with a fixed fee, managed by art critics, through which “unknown,” not-yet professional artists can access artistic visibility through this new kind of agency (still not so many), which provides all for an art exposition in special or historically sophisticated villas or ancient buildings. An example of this would be Giulia Sillato, who, in Expo 2015 in Milan, opened the Palace of Giureconsulti for 95 “artists” who wanted to show their artworks: a very prestigious location at a crucial time when the city was visited by many tourists and foreign potential buyers.
5. The artistic production team: this involves a star artist or architect who is responsible for the artistic project that a team realizes. For instance, MUDEC (*Museo delle Culture* “Museum of Cultures”) in Milan can be an example of how a project can be carried out by others once the leader of the project, artist or architect, has designed the project itself. However, depending on financial issues, the project can have an outcome that is not that which was originally conceived.

According to Giulio C. Argan, in an interview called “the industry of art” from the 1980s, art as a traditional technical system was based on an artisan production, oriented toward a maximum of quality and a minimum of quantity, while contemporary art was shaping its new characteristics from a more material world, oriented mainly toward a quantity of logic of production, with grave consequences for the concepts of value, choice, and worth. The reproduction of the artistic product for mass markets is the highest peak of visibility that artistic action could aim at, while, on the other hand, wide consensus on artistic actions is the first sign of a mass work of art. And this seems to be, nowadays, the new concern of art itself caught between market success and low-profile original creativity.

Art and Power

Some artistic phenomena seem to be created by the moods of men of power who like to stabilize their own governmental position through art and thus these works speak directly to the everyday life of the population as well as to its imagination. Leni Riefensthal (1902–2003) is thought to be a highly talented artist who was fascinated by the power of the Third Reich in Germany and actually damaged by this affiliation. On the contrary, however, she seems to be, according to Demetrio Paparoni (2014), a clear example of a low-talent artist built up by the power of propaganda that Hitler's regime activated in order to support her art.⁶ Every regime or powerful government based on charisma needs a number of supportive activities and a formation of culture to confirm its strength and belief, as well as the construction of its own world. A more recent example of art and power is that even Silvio Berlusconi has had a relationship with art when, in the early 1990s, he commissioned from the sculptor Pietro Cascella a mausoleum meant to hold his future remains and those of his intimate friends in the park of his house in Arcore (Dal Lago and Giordano 2014).

The relationship between art and power moves from the rebellion against the *status quo* and from the will of changing the world through artistic actions to creating celebrative works of art for wealthy and powerful people in order to assure their status. Caravaggio (1571–1610), a recognized master already in his lifetime, was financed by rich and powerful people who wanted to be surrounded by the best art. However, low-talented but loyal artists are also commissioned by powerful people. In the latter case, the artists have been considered as good and reliable “workers.”

Economic logic has nowadays taken over the criteria of a good job, originality, talent, and outstanding qualities, in order to replace them with other criteria such as faithfulness to the power, a strong committed attitude to a project rather than a singular destiny to follow, or even simply a good bank account which can assure a good investment in building up one's own artistic profile. From a long-term historical perspective, art has been in a three-phase transformative process. First, art was considered as a unique work, then, along the development of capitalism, it was addressed toward the markets. And today, in the last phase, art becomes a market good *tout court*.

Art markets consist of relations that occur in specific places in which works of art can be received and, eventually, consumed as market objects.⁷ In Simmelian terms, it could be said that art becomes a commodified good for a commodified culture. Art extends its potentiality and can better realize its creations through technical progress, but on the other hand, it nonetheless depends on the relation to money, which changes the value of all objects, even artistic ones.

Art markets are based on social conventions, because the exchange of an artwork can take place in different places and on different levels of cultural and economic exchange (Dal Lago and Giordano 2007). Places such as modern shows, biennales, and institutions in which the relation to art is regulated by a market system are in fact both places of commerce and of art discourse construction. Already with the first figures of independent artists by the late fifteenth century, art itself was not on the free markets, but was more related to the power of potential buyers. What kind of power is being considered here: power as a structured position that can influence production and creativity, or as an economic power to realize a work of art?

The discourse for constructing art in Italy is now shifting into the realm of everyday life. There is, for instance, a mushrooming phenomenon of art consumption and exchange in the form of tourist packages. On the other hand, there is a kind of art that turns into social space in order to use art energy as an organizer of social dignity and a sense of belonging. The case of *Fondazione Adriano Olivetti* (Adriano Olivetti Foundation) in Torino and Rome is an interesting case in point. The Foundation took on the scheme of the *Nouveaux commanditaires* (New Patrons) in France and aims at realizing a fruitful contact between art and specific needs of the civil society.

Art Between *Engagement* and Production

The *Nouveaux commanditaires* project is fostered in Italy by the Adriano Olivetti Foundation, but is a project that was started in 1991 in France by François Hers and promoted by the *Fondation de France*. “It is based on projects and researches for public space,” writes the Adriano Olivetti

Foundation, “and aims at reaching and activating a demand for arts, as quality of life, social integration or urban recovery, in order to make citizens participate directly to the artistic intervention for their own spaces and workplaces” (Aa. Vv. 2008, 15–18). In this case, art keeps its originality and fantasy in order to give more value to everyday life projects—arts and daily life come together to create spaces for the citizens and with the citizens. The citizen herself or himself takes part in the process, becoming a commissioner, a community commissioner for a community aim. In this procedure, the markets have a secondary position, and it is the step where the Foundation, as mediator of the process, elevates the process to a more professional level. However, the entire process is ruled by and centered on a relation that is not merely and finally an economics-oriented one.⁸

This program is mainly meant to deal with social and citizenship themes through artistic projects, in which art is produced for the community and with the help of the community. Art for the community and the community for art provides an alternative to market-oriented art. It is an action that aims at inviting citizens to face public or social problems, or community development problems through a commissioned artwork. Citizens work together with the artist in order to instruct her or him about the needs of the people to build their own habitat. This is the case of some public plazas or social services for poor people. The commissioned artwork is a work in progress: anything can happen in this field of transformation and mediation of relations, values, and beliefs.⁹ *Nouveaux commanditaires* is a procedure for the production of artworks triggered by the effective needs of the citizens and social institutions such as associations, hospitals, universities, prisons, and factories. Through this project, anyone can become a commissioner for art, thanks to the interaction between the three actors: citizens (who switch from users into commissioners), the artist, and the mediator (who works together with both in order to choose the artist and to interpret the needs of the citizens).

One of the most recent projects developed with the “procedure” of *Nuovi committenti* (New Patrons) in Italy is the project for the prison of Bollate (Mi), finished in 2015. This project was created in order to redevelop some areas of the prison, to render these areas accessible to the

whole community, so as to progressively create a change in the perception and use of the place itself. The intervention started from the area that was projected to become a kindergarten for the children of the police working in the institution and the external space in front of it. Formerly thought of only as a private space of the prison and meant to serve only the children of the workers of the institution, the kindergarten will also host, in the future, the children living in the neighborhood. For this reason, the area of the kindergarten will become an in-between area which will symbolically, and also in practice, connect the institution to the city by means of an independent entrance leading to the area, which will become a public park with small kiosks and different activities for the children. This project aims at rendering the place more attractive for those who work in the prison in order to create a line of connection that recalls this necessarily closed institution to the life of the city.

Another possibility that also seems to take place in the markets or the system of circulation of art is the manager of art. Gallery managers have, for a long time, been well-known within the markets of art, for the capacity they have to grasp new tendencies of the markets and to choose or orient the most faithful artists waiting for visibility. The word which is usually used in this context is the *scuderia* (stable) of artists of a certain gallery, which means a number of aspirant artists who trust that a gallery manager will find them the best occasion to enter the circle of *happy and rich* artists in the market network. The gallery can be paid or not depending on at which level the game is played. This assures, however, that the artist can hopefully present expositions of her or his artworks in selected galleries.

The politics of “cultural resources” deals not only with the past, but can become a life experience. Art of the past can become a precious resource for memory, feelings, and belonging, but also for a collective identity and the construction of individual conscience. Accordingly, the markets of “cultural heritage” have changed in Italy. Expositions of museums or exposition centers are mostly organized in the format of television programs. In these expositions, there are groups of experts able to take care of all of the practical and organizational issues. Only few expositions are carried out by internal curators of museums; more likely, these services are bought on the markets as “packages” where everything will be

taken care of by an enterprise acting in this field. These firms are able to make all the necessary steps needed to realize an art exhibition, from placing to display of the objects of art to the financial and administrative issues. Such enterprises have a number of different professionals who can build the exhibition from scratch and sell the museum the complete service. In this case, art is a business issue on many levels, from the piece of art itself to the organization of the event and the presentation of the artistic work.

Closing Remarks

Avant-garde artists, in particular Futurists, writing down the new criteria of art, switched from form to potentiality: a work of art should have been considered as such according to its rareness: “In intellectual issues, the necessary ‘rarity’ (not casual) of a creation is directly proportionate to the amount of energy needed to produce it,”¹⁰ as reported in the Manifesto (*Pesi, misure e prezzi del genio artistico*) written by the futurists Bruno Corradini and Emilio Settimelli, in Milan, March 11, 1914. These were the new criteria for art production according to the Futurist movement and probably shared by most modern art production.

At the turn of the millennium, the new criteria proposed by the Futurists seem to be lost inside the world of art itself. In Italy, as in other Western countries, the work of art has become one of the possible ways to create networks, packages to be sold to the wide number of unknown artists wanting fame and recognition. To make a piece of art nowadays is more complicated than merely expressing an artistic idea. Instead of giving one’s life a meaning, many pieces of art seem to respond to the main question of contemporary society: how to find a way, if possible the shortest way, to become visible, to make a successful business.

Art still charms with its mystery and with its impossible definition, which, far from being a moral definition, is, above all, a need. Some new forms of art market are also creating the artist itself: nonprofessional art lovers can aspire to become visible with the help of managers of artistic talent, who simply aim at selling their idea with a variety of semi-artistic products that the aspirants buy in order to become visible “artists.”

Does our time still have a need for authentic or artistic expression in the capitalist media and market society, where everybody can have her or his 15 minutes of popularity, as Warhol used to say? If the early avant-garde artists tried to stretch the language in order to find a new order of the language, contemporary society has to find the best artistic language that can enter the arid logic of economy and transform it with its own code into a warm, passionate language of art. However, the autonomy of avant-garde art from the direct commissioner was an opportunity to leave what Pitirim A. Sorokin (1957, 370–74) defined as “sensistic art,” which is a kind of art that describes the reaction of the senses to the social context. Through this, the autonomy of the avant-garde opened the way to “idealistic” art, which derives from an idea of social engagement but also from a different role of art within the capitalistic society of the early twentieth century. Analogously, with the possibility of its own market network, contemporary art can become a social actor in the markets. Art such as this could reflect on the economic dimension of artistic expression. According to Herbert Read (1982): “Only if a society becomes sensitive by the means of art, can this same society have access to ideas.”

Notes

1. This chapter is based on a number of the following previous works on avant-garde art and in which wide-ranging comments and argumentations of the positions of these authors are elaborated upon: Riccioni, I. 1997: *L'ambiguità dell'opera di Antonin Artaud*. In “Lo Spettacolo”. 447–461. N. 4. October–December 1997; Riccioni, I. 2003: *Futurismo, logica del postmoderno. Saggio su arte e società*. Imola. La Mandragora; Riccioni, I. 2004: *Alle origini di un'avanguardia: futuristi per religione?*. In “Sociologia. Rivista quadrimestrale di scienze storiche e sociali” (“Sociology. History and social sciences review”). N°1; Riccioni, I. 2006: *Depero. La reinvenzione della realtà*. Chieti. Solfanelli; Riccioni, I. 2006: *Arte d'avanguardia e società. L'esperienza futurista nel pensiero sociale e culturale contemporaneo*. Roma. L'albatros; Riccioni, I. 2007: *L'arte come processo interpretativo della società occidentale. Il caso delle avanguardie*. In “Metis. Ricerche di sociologia, psicologia e antropologia della comunicazione”. 7–25. XIV. N. 1. Cleup. Padova; Riccioni, I. 2009: “Mimesi, arte

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2. Riccioni (2006, 103).
 3. Translation of the author.
 4. Translation of the author.
 5. See Rosenblum in Poli (1999, 168–73).
 6. See Paparoni (2014, 75–96).
 7. See Dal Lago and Giordano (2007, 249–64).
 8. For more details on one project ruled by the *Nouveaux Commanditaires*, see Fourmentraux, J.P., “L'art est public. Création artistique et démocratie participative,” in Farneti, Riccioni (eds) 2012. pp. 34–43.
 9. For more details, see *Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, Nuovi committenti*, www.fondazioneadrianolivetti.it
 10. See Riccioni (2003, 138).

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5

Art as a Means to Produce Social Benefits and Social Innovations

Katarzyna Niziołek

Introduction: Changes in the Artistic Field

These days the predominant political and economic assumption concerning art and culture is that they should be used for profits. This assumption is implicit in such notions as “economy of culture,” “creative industries,” or “urban renewal,” as a part of so-called post-Fordism, cognitive capitalism, or knowledge economy. A number of development advocates, including UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) experts, have argued that art and culture can be profitable in a neoliberal, market-oriented, commercial sense. For this reason, contemporary societies are expected to support “creativity” and “innovation” (two catchphrases of the day) in order to stimulate economic growth, especially in such sectors as information technology, tourism, advertising, art markets, design, fashion, film, mass media, and music.

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Some artists and modern art proponents have responded to this trend by reviving the elitist “art for art’s sake” argument that “true” art has to be divorced from any utilitarian function. Though speaking mostly in defense of their particular interests, and in the first instance trying to secure the state financing of “autonomous,” “avant-garde,” or “experimental” artistic production, they have pointed to the central problem of “cultural capitalism.” The presumed creativity of cultural industries is in fact very limited, for it is bound to support the cultural hegemony of the new global economic order. Unless commercializing dissent, the cultural markets gradually marginalize the role of critical thinking, radical action, counterculture, alternative lifestyles, and creative communities.

There is also another group of artists who see art as essentially useful, although not in a commercial but social sense. These artists are supported by many other social actors, such as cultural animators, educators, social workers, activists, and just ordinary citizens. The practices they have been collectively introducing at least since the 1970s (dubbed a decade of participatory revolution) fall into a number of theoretical categories: public art, new genre public art, street art, activist art, community art, participatory art, social practice, collaborative art, dialogic art, and cooperative art.¹ What these practices have in common is at least partial abandonment of the art world frames and turn toward meaningful interactions with nonartistic individuals and communities, in order to provide art with social importance and impulse. They are strongly influenced by democratic imagination, often following Joseph Beuys’ idea that “every man is an artist,” not so much a creator of artworks as a conscious subject of social change.

To complete the picture, it is perhaps necessary to see the above domains of artistic practice, commercial, vanguard, and social, not only in mutual conflict, but also in contrast with the canonical or legitimate art world and its consecrated artistic traditions. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1995), the artistic field has a fourfold structure, which is marked by constant struggle for social positioning within the field. These conflicts encompass not only aesthetics (styles and conventions), but also the issues of arts production, accessibility, utility, discourse, reception, participation, and recognition. The boundaries, rules, and roles of the artistic field are historical and changeable. Thus, they should not be taken

for granted. Neither should they be treated as disconnected from other fields of social life. Although, since the nineteenth century, the field has enjoyed relative autonomy, it remains responsive to shifts in outward power relations. Bourdieu (1995, 127) writes:

If the permanent struggles between possessors of specific capital and those who are still deprived of it constitute the motor of an incessant transformation of the supply of symbolic products, it remains true that they can only lead to deep transformations of the symbolic relations of force that result in the overthrowing of the hierarchy of genres, schools and authors when these struggles can draw support from external changes moving in the same direction.

For that very reason, from the moment the artistic field won its relative autonomy, the relationship between the four modes of symbolic creation enumerated by Bourdieu has been many a time disturbed and reconfigured. Already in the first decades of the twentieth century, artistic vanguards not only rejected conventional artistic media, such as painting or sculpture, but also discarded purely aesthetic innovations. Dada in Western Europe and constructivism in Eastern Europe were all about experiments, both artistic, and social, while modernist architecture made a practical step into social utopia. Since the 1950s, adoption of “environments,” “happenings,” and “actions” has turned artists’ attention to the everyday as an art’s material, and the everyman as an art’s participant. In the following decades, in the Western countries, art has literally been taken to the streets and intermixed with the life politics of new social movements. Feminism and post-colonialism have questioned the legitimacy of cultural canons, norms, and representations. In the late modern age, the patterns of art reception, although still serving distinctions, are gradually shifting toward individualism and “omnivorousness” (see Peterson and Kern 1996), and the Internet is transforming everyone into a cultural producer. From this perspective, artistic practices described by such notions as Suzanne Lacy’s “new genre public art” or Beuys’ “social sculpture” may be seen as resulting from wider social processes of democratization.

When one looks at the present-day artistic field, it becomes clear that for each of the quarters of Bourdieu’s grid, the consequences of democra-

tization vary. While in the case of legitimate art, democratization comes with a wider popular access to public arts institutions, such as museums, galleries, theaters, and even arts schools, avant-garde art, whether formally radical or socially critical or both, makes use of democratic rights, such as freedom of speech and expression, to create a necessarily political impact or, as Jacques Ranciere (2004) argues, to redistribute the sensible. Nonetheless, both legitimate and vanguard artistic creations remain oriented to the art world and cater mostly for the sophisticated taste of the upper and upper-middle classes. They also establish cultural values that are imposed on the rest of society.

On the other hand, commercial and social art seem to be more egalitarian in their outreach. Because commercial art is by definition profit driven, it provides mostly for the common taste of the middle and lower classes (the majority of society), and its democratic dimension is reduced to mass access and reception. By means of reproduction, appropriation, and popularization, commercial art feeds on the legitimate and even avant-garde art, creating additional channels for their circulation. It might be seen as opposed by both avant-garde art and social art; however, the sources of these oppositions are not the same. While avant-garde art tends to be critical of the commodification of art (hence the development of performance art, concept art, and such), social art constitutes itself as a form of grassroots engagement. It is directly connected to the ideas of public participation and social benefits, as contrasted with mere arts participation and artistic effect of many a practice of contemporary art. Hence, as far as democratic systems are concerned, today's social art, rather than bringing about revolution, serves as a means to reproduce the democratic conditions, including empowerment (participation in decision-making, countering discrimination), pluralism (multitude of worldviews and lifestyles), and criticism (readiness to reflect upon the *status quo* and to introduce changes).

Social Art: A Theoretical Framework

This chapter is focused on the notion of social art, introduced as a theoretical model and further developed on the basis of qualitative research conveyed in Poland between 2010 and 2012, with the main focus being

on in-depth interviews with animators, participants, and observers of the practices under scrutiny.² The term “social art” is derived from Joseph Beuys’ idea of social sculpture (*soziale Skulptur*), among other inspirations; however, it is given a more scientific, sociological, and empirically rooted meaning. The adjective “social” suggests a parallel to social activity and social organizations, as social art takes place in the same sector of society. Furthermore, it highlights the theoretical distinction of social art from public art, community art, activist art, and other partly similar phenomena.³ I have decided to introduce this term into sociology also to avoid getting involved in disputes over the aesthetic or artistic value of the so-called “social practice” (Lind 2012), held by art theorists and critics.⁴

I propose to define social art as a combination of five interrelated elements: (1) the aim or result of an activity (social change or public benefit), (2) the addressees of the activity (broad social groups or categories, such as a rural community, an urban neighborhood, immigrants, women, and youths), (3) the way the addressees are engaged in the activity—as creators or recipients of art (no requirements of artistic skill, or other intended barriers of participation or reception), (4) the place where the activity is undertaken (public, noninstitutional sphere,⁵ within the middle-level structures, outside both the art world and public cultural institutions), and (5) the quality of the activity (bottom-up, spontaneous, self-organized, responsive, oriented toward civil and democratic values).

Social art may be created by individuals or groups, including professional artists working solo or in collaboration, as well as by communities, and even spontaneous collectives, such as crowds or social movements, that act in the mezzo-sphere, between the microprivate and macropublic structures, and beyond “traditional” political, cultural, and economic institutions. It is usually set in the context of an open public space, local community, or minority group, that is, a group of lower social status with limited possibilities for citizen or political action. In comparison with other forms of civil activity, social art may be characterized by a broader scope of participants’ creativity, fuller recognition of their agency, and a higher level of spontaneity in action. It also meets two basic standards of civil society: empowerment and subsidiarity. As a civil activity, it rests on the idea of engaging “with people,” and not merely “for people”; it operates through reciprocal communication, interaction, and exchange.

Encouraging equal participation, social art prepares individuals for independent, creative, critical thinking and conscious interference with one's environment (be it material, social, or political). It does not provide participants with ready solutions, nor does it supply them with goods, or services. Instead, it equips the participants, either creators or recipients of art, with intellectual and conceptual tools, which, by changing the way they think and act toward their surroundings, enable them to achieve the changes they desire on their own.

Defined as above, social art constitutes a specific area (enclave) of civil society or, in other words, the third sector of society (separate from both the state and the market). It comprises all sorts of activities linking artistic creation with social activism. The instances of social art include participatory artistic practices, interventionist strategies within public art, street art and street culture (including adusting and culture jamming), artistic "new communities,"⁶ community art, Internet collective projects, associations of amateur artists, unconventional theatrical practices, grassroots creation of cultural spaces, contemporary folk art, as well as individual unprofessional artistic creativity (boosted by electronic media) and beautification of one's surroundings. The research findings presented in this chapter show that social art serves a number of crucial civil functions, such as social articulation, creation of social bonds, and social mobilization, to mention but a few, which makes it a vehicle of social benefits and changes, both on the structural and on the cultural level.

Social Benefits and Social Innovations

Social benefits and social innovations may be understood as any activity that strengthens civil society, and, as such, refer to both the purpose and the process or performance of a social action. According to Piotr Gliński (2007), one of the most prominent Polish theorists and researchers of civil society, social or public benefit indicates any socially useful activity, which either provides a society with some goods or services they need, or indirectly serves the development of some desired features of society, such as openness, pluralism, or democracy. Defined as this, social benefit can take two forms: external (when it affects broader social collectives) or

internal (when it is constrained to the members of a certain group or organization⁷). Peter F. Drucker (2011) stresses that in the nongovernmental, nonprofit sector, innovation should be seen as a new dimension of performance, rather than merely the intent of change. Looking at social art from this perspective, one needs to focus on the effects it may possibly produce on the level of civil society.

However, the effects of social art are not easy to count or measure. Professionalized nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) usually formulate their aims as SMART: specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, and time-bound. The problem with this tactic is that it reduces the meaning of their social efficacy to countable results and short-term perspective, while changes caused by NGOs (as well as other forms of civil activity) are mostly of a social and cultural kind; they concern attitudes,⁸ social relations and networks, and collective concepts (identity, memory, imagery, values and norms, mentality). Hence, the effects of civil enterprises, first, are difficult to isolate; second, they should be observed over an extended span of time. Consequently, the number of recipients or participants should never be used as the ultimate measure of the efficacy of social art, especially because, in comparison with other forms of civil activity, the practice seems to have a greater potential for indirect influence on society, showing a certain “radiating” quality.

The feminist performer and activist Suzanne Lacy (in Roth 1989) points to three dimensions of her socially engaged artistic practice that she considers as indicators of its social effect or success; these are: (1) the quality of the performance experience for its participants and audience; (2) the potential of the networking inherent in her practice as a model that could be applied elsewhere—in other communities, to other issues, under different circumstances; and (3) the continuity of the processes started by the performance in time. Still, when it comes to self-assessment, she remains critical of the efficacy of her art, especially as far as its networking and continuity possibilities are concerned. On the other hand, the art historian Deborah J. Haynes (1997) points to the capacity of art, such as Lacy’s, to provoke emotional response and social actions, including those aimed at suppressing the effect of a certain artistic piece. She matches this capacity to the “power of image” as an attribute of any art, from painting to performance, and concludes that “especially when created in collaboration and with both

aesthetic and political savvy, art is a powerful tool for changing consciousness and creating social change” (Hayness 1997, 48). Yet, neither the artist, nor the historian propose any methodological means that would allow a more systematic empirical access to the enumerated aspects of art’s, in particular social art’s, efficacy.

An attempt at a more scientific, in this case quantitative, questionnaire-based evaluation of the social benefits of participation in the arts⁹ was made by a British think tank Comedia and François Matarasso (1997). Between 1995 and 1997, the researchers explored the social impact of artistic practices in six different, though partly overlapping, areas: (1) personal development, (2) social cohesion, (3) community empowerment and self-determination, (4) local image and identity, (5) imagination and vision, and (6) health and well-being. The empirical material they collected allowed them to enumerate 50 different social outcomes that can be produced by participatory arts projects, on the level of both individuals and society. On the part of individuals, such projects are reported to result in increased self-confidence, the learning of new skills, and interest in something new, while their societal outcomes include the creation of social bonds, learning about diverse cultures, and getting involved in other community activities, to mention but a few examples. The researchers attribute the social benefits brought about by art to such qualities as creativity, openness, and elasticity. Although methodologically and ideologically disputable (see Merli 2002), their research does provide evidence that the changes set in motion by art can be observed, evaluated, and planned in community contexts.

Still another, and in my opinion, the most adequate approach to art as a means to produce social benefits and social innovations can be derived from the civil society theories and research, and it is connected to the sociological notion of social functions. Gliński (2005) specifies such functions of the civil sector as identification and articulation of various social groups’ needs and interests, expression of social protests, citizen control over governments on various levels (local, state, global), participation in legal procedures and decision-making (through voting initiatives or social consultations), warning against social hazards and conflicts, generating middle-level structures and actions, formulating alternative visions of social development, education, and creation of a citizen cul-

ture. If social art is a specific enclave of civil society, as it was stated above, it must, at least to some extent, fulfill these (and perhaps some other) civil functions.

Social Art in Poland: Research Findings

The civil functions of social art, seen as benefits and innovations brought about by this kind of activity, and as indicators of its efficacy, can be divided into three categories, according to the typical contexts in which they occur: the public space, local communities, and social minorities. The limited space of this chapter does not allow a detailed presentation of the research findings for each of these categories; hence, the analysis provided below takes the form of a synthetic, even sketchy, account of the field observations.¹⁰

Social Art in Public Space

Social art is by definition a public activity. Hence, it either is undertaken directly in some public, shared space, or in some way, be it conceptual, performative, or interactive, actively refers to the public sphere, especially by involving the notions of discourse, opinion, communication, conflict, consensus, and representation. Within this empirical category of social art, one may enumerate: murals, graffiti and other forms of street art, theatrical actions, performances, happenings, Situationist interventions, relational projects (based on encounter and interaction), social actions, informational campaigns, subvertising, Internet projects, public events (such as parades, games, or dances), and even collective rituals. In terms of civil functions, social art in public space may serve the purposes of social protest, articulation, critique,¹¹ communication, and mobilization. It is generally oriented toward constructing, broadening, and reclaiming public space.

The interviewees define public space as an alternative field of artistic practice, which in turn becomes more open, interactive, and participatory, or as the arena of civil activity that resorts to art to introduce changes in

people and their environment, or, perhaps most interestingly, as the domain of spontaneous emergence of social and cultural structures. “It’s just that I am always going out with my work—says one of the interviewed artists—and I talk to people, because people are afraid of going to galleries, and don’t understand contemporary art” [IA33].¹² Another interviewee, an artist-activist, states: “There is no reason that we shouldn’t think of public space as our own field to cultivate” [PS7]. Furthermore, public space is treated as common property, which everyone is entitled to use: “In public space you can act yourself [...], do what you like, and not necessarily the others. But, of course, any other person has the right to come and change what you’ve done. It’s the risk of acting in an open space, our space” [IA17]. Seeing public space as “ours,” some interviewees elaborate on more participatory models of its organization, such as “city 2:0” (like web 2:0, which is created and controlled by the users). “The city should be available to be changed, so that some percentage of this space would be ‘soft’, so that everyone could paint, or move, or bring something, or reconstruct it in some way” [IA11]. And finally, the interviewees with subcultural background, such as punk or hip-hop, consider public space as a “tissue” that, through noninstitutional creative activity (in music, dance, performance, or graffiti), spontaneously generates social bonds and norms:

They identify with each other—says the leader of a punk band—there is certain loyalty, and certain rules. It’s civil, as far as it results from a contact with another human being. These groups act very organically—I can count on you, you can count on me [...]. I think that nowadays there is more civil society in the streets, than in all those socially perceptible, acceptable and legitimized structures. [KN5]

However, the civil quality of such subcultural social capital seems questionable because of its bonding, excluding, and closing nature (see Putnam 1993).

Most interviewees match the concept of public space with the city. This assumption implies that modern civil life is a necessarily urban phenomenon. Yet, public space is not only identified with streets, plazas, squares, and parks, but rather seen as elastic. It is equally associated with pubs, cafés, and shops, providing that these are not exclusory sort of places. Public space is defined in terms of open, easy access and the pos-

sibility of meeting other people, rather than public ownership. The interviews also show innovativeness in relation to the places of arts creation and presentation, with preference for nonart spaces, from private apartments, through backyards and bus stops, to billboards, which are available to people who normally do not attend art museums, or even cultural centers. One of the interviewees explains: “We can do art on the street, as well as at the theater. Literally everywhere. Or in a private apartment” [KK1]. In this way, social art not only transcends conventions of gallery art, but also broadens the scope of public art.

On the other hand, in small-town and rural contexts, the notion of public space is rarely referred to directly, except for projects that deal specifically with the aesthetics of the common spaces in a town or village. Yet, in these contexts, social art is often oriented toward bottom-up creation of community cultural centers that are supposed to fill in the “cultural void,”¹³ which is characteristic of a Polish province. This is connected to another typical rationale for social art, which is reconstruction of local customs and traditions, such as decoration, song, and music, which are vanishing under the pressures of modernization and globalization. It is important to note, however, that this reconstruction is not aimed at the revival of a traditional community, but at strengthening local bonds by creating a new kind of “civil community”: modern, open, culturally self-aware, and self-governed.

Apart from urban and rural references, the category of public space becomes extended due to the development of new, electronic, largely social media. Consequently, material space and cyberspace are seen as equivalent sites of public artistic practice. “We live in a digital world—says a promoter of street art—so the truth is that one can paint a picture on his own waste container, and it may live on the Internet, and 99% of its audience is on the Internet. Thus, in my opinion, street art is really done mostly on the Internet” [KK13]. To some extent, the new media replace cultural institutions, such as galleries or cinemas; they allow access to wider audiences and encourage nonprofessional creative practices and spontaneous changes in the social definition of art. A net artist explains: “So it actually means that we can understand art in any possible way, and a work of art is, as if, a material that you are given to create your own meanings from” [PS2]. Moreover, social art in the cyberspace utilizes new possibilities for interaction (such as gamification) and news circulation

(from independent media to mediatization of social issues), which the electronic media offer.

A number of interviewees point to the correlation between the quality of public space and the development of civil society. They perceive art as a means of grassroots reclamation of public space, both in its aesthetic and in its social dimension. This process of reclamation is described as manifold. First, it is associated with the recovery of public space as an agora or forum, a site of democratic, public debate. This perspective is voiced, for instance, in the following passage:

That's why I do street art and socially engaged graffiti. Because it is a superb vehicle for different ideas and opinions. This is my way to transmit these ideas and deliver them to the public, hoping that I can inspire them to act for the benefit of the others. [PS22]

Second, the quality of public space is connected to the Aristotelian notion of “*philia*,” so it is seen as a site of socializing and fostering of the spirit of community:

I have no intention of delivering any artificial workshops here—declares an interviewed artist. I simply want the things that will happen here during this month, the things that we'll do together, for which people will come here, things that we'll experience, I want these things to give fruits. [IA33]

Third, social art is adopted as a tool for decommercializing public space. However, in Poland, the radical tactics of adbusting or subvertising are not so popular as in Western Europe and North America. In Polish public space, anticapitalist attitudes are usually expressed through critical murals, stencils, or billboards. We are told, for example:

One may say the optimistic option is overrepresented, while no one speaks about the real problems that are shaking this world. [...] Because of the underrepresentation of the reflexive element, the problematic element, our projects are largely devoted to such issues. [IA18]

Fourth, the reclamation of public space takes the form of community organizing—engaging citizens in a variety of artistic activities, usually

held within a neighborhood, and enabling participants of these activities to collectively reshape their immediate environment:

Look at this project. It isn't spectacular at all. We may take this stuff, and everything is gone, it becomes a lawn again. What's going on here is a kind of magic: people enter, get emotional, open up, experience something, and so on. And they start to create this reality on their own. [IA33]

Finally, the notion of reclamation is associated with the revitalization of public space, but one which is founded on alternative, postmaterialist values, such as ecology or community (see Inglehart 1990). Social art practitioners typically distance themselves from commercial revitalization and the gentrification that follows. Instead, they aim at raising the quality of local life and nurturing local identities.

In comparison with institutionalized public art, social art in public space follows a different logic. An individual artist tends to become less important, the creative process, often participatory, is seen as equally relevant as the artistic effect, and the art is primarily aimed at engaging people—intellectually, emotionally, and practically. As reported by the interviewees, social art in public space allows: making new social contacts; creating community; provoking reflection; overstepping mental barriers; communicating ideas, opinions, needs, and social problems; exposing hidden commercial messages or taboo social issues; commenting on public policies; broadening of the repertoire of collective action; inspiring social engagement; creating educational situations; supporting the everyday work of NGOs; animating the public space; and, last but not least, upholding grassroots creativity. Hence, it might be concluded that in public space, social art draws its potential for producing social benefits and innovations from the alternative, unconventional possibilities of expression, communication, and participation that it opens.

Social Art in Local Communities

In the local context, social art may address any of the four dimensions of a local community: spatial (attitudes toward the place), social (character of social bonds), mental (identity, sense of belonging), and civic (self-

organized activity). It may be used for the sake of creating positive connections to locality, strengthening social bonds, or constructing collective identity. It may also help to mobilize community members around their common interests. A wide range of strategies, methods, tools, and means of expression may be applied to achieve these ends, including street art, performance, psychogeography, theater, photography, and video-making, to mention but a few. In local communities, practitioners of social art typically resort to history, ethnography, and local cultural resources, such as customs, traditions, symbols, legends, songs, designs, and other elements of folk art or street culture. The activities are necessarily interdisciplinary—combining artistic expression with education, social work, or simply entertainment—as well as participatory and community based. Hence, social art in local contexts also creates an alternative to more conventional, usually event-oriented, cultural offers provided by public cultural institutions; it broadens people's access to cultural activity and education, and supports grassroots initiatives in the cultural domain.

Within the research framework, social art was observed in four types of local communities: village communities, which often experience economic deterioration caused by transformation (e.g., former State Agricultural Farms), small peripheral (“provincial”) towns, and large cities: either in residential districts consisting of large blocks of flats or in high-poverty neighborhoods (ghettos). In such locations, economic deprivation goes hand in hand with cultural barriers, such as passivity, resignation, and dependence, while participation in public life requires the opposite—activity, engagement, and self-reliance. Hence, socioartistic activities that address these conditions often focus on the “change in human beings” (Drucker 2011) and deal with the way in which community members perceive their surroundings (the place, the people), and their own role in modeling it.

The research allows us to divide the practices under scrutiny into three categories: intervention projects (one-time, ephemeral, led by “landing troops” of artists/animators), “portable” or “nomadic” projects (multiplied, following the same concept and pattern of action in various communities), and “being in a community” (based on permanent presence and work in a local environment, rooted in a specific local context). The interviewees see “being in a community” as the most desirable model of

activity on the local level, which, however, due to structural blockades, such as lack of stable funding, or local elites' disengagement, is rarely implemented, and for many an organization remains unreachable. This explains, why, in spite of the advantages associated by the interviewees with this model, such as the possibility of long-term and multidimensional participation and stronger connection to the community based on trust and personal bonds, it is intervention that predominates in local contexts. In addition, the interviews reveal that the dependence of social art projects on annual granting schedules, which is typical of the Polish subsidizing system, not only makes long-term engagement impossible, but also limits art's efficacy by leading to the so-called phantom activity (see Gliński 2006).¹⁴

However, the major obstacle to the desired functionality of social art in local communities is their dependence on external resources. A young participant in an arts project notes: "For children, it was fascinating, and for the community in general, that something was happening in the village. Everyone knows that the countryside is a dead place. But if you start something, it's getting cool" [PS20]. A participant of another project shares this opinion: "No one was interested in our village before. No projects were proposed. Nothing. [...] No one came here. [...] I wish there were more projects like this" [PS27]. Her twin sister adds: "Exactly. In summer, for example, what could we do with our time? It was boredom. The village is small. I wish another project was done here" [PS27]. A village leader makes a similar observation: "The youngsters [...] had a lot of fun, played different games, some new ideas were born, and suddenly it all stopped. [...] Nothing's going on. Now they're waiting for some new action" [PS39]. The artists and animators working in local communities perceive them as "an extremely immature society" [PS21]. It is symptomatic of the village communities that they tend to await support, intervention, or inspiration from the outside. Usually, the villagers are eager to help, but are incapable of initiating their own actions. Most of the communities are unable to self-organize and tackle common tasks, which results in an underuse of their own potential and possibilities for development. Consequently, small-town and village communities tend to rely on some kind of outsourcing. Artists and animators come to a place, bringing knowledge and skills, as well as material resources (grants

of various kind), with them. When they are gone, the community returns to its usual passive ways.

When comparing different arts projects carried out in local contexts, we find a close connection between the level of a community's participation and incorporation of the members' own experiences within the project's framework. If a project or program engages the people inside their everyday practice, it is more likely to be accepted and thus becomes an important part of the community's life. I propose to call such projects "affirmative," as they require recognition of the community and the members' own experience, be it historical or cultural. On the other hand, if artists or animators try to introduce something "vanguard" and detached from the local cultural, historical, and social context, they often meet with mental, cultural, or social obstacles. However, "being in a community" allows gradual enrichment of the action repertoire: from means that are close to the community's experiences that are accessible, and intelligible, to those that are more demanding, and unfamiliar, but, because of that, also appealing. With this in mind, it is important to stress that rejection of a project by a community is often determined by the project's very characteristics, such as separation from the local context, limited participation of the community members, incomprehensibility of the project's rationale, imposition of expert "treatment" upon the community, dismissal of the community's voice, or priority given to the artists', not to the community's, interests. Under these circumstances, social art may become a source of conflict in the community, or between the artists and the community, or the artists and the local government.

As regards the notion of development, it is addressed by the interviewees either from an individual or from a social perspective. In the first case, social art is reported to foster one's cultural capital (see Bourdieu and Passeron 2000), to help enhance skills necessary to adapt to the modern world, increase self-esteem, break the circle of deprivation, isolation, and passivity, as well as to develop creative talents and artistic skills. In the second case, it is stated that social art increases community capacity, especially in such aspects as cooperation, self-governance, participation, self-organization, and creativity. Among the functions of social art that are related to community development, the interviewees point to: regional and local education, strengthening of local patriotism, maintaining (and

building upon) positive local identity, appreciation and promotion of the locality, social inclusion, developing the habit of civic engagement, and changing attitudes to being more community oriented. Nevertheless, I would argue that in spite of such a wide array of possible (and apparently achievable) effects, boosting community capacity through social art is not an easy task. First and foremost, it does take time, and also, it requires active involvement by the community.

Social Art in Minority Groups

Social minorities constitute a wide sociological category which encompasses racial, national, ethnic, religious, and language groups, as well as groups that are distinguished on other grounds, such as social class, gender, sexual orientation, age, place of living, health, disability, homelessness, being a member of a subculture, profession, or identification with an ethos group. In fact, any social or cultural characteristic may become the reason for differentiation from the sociocultural background and result in division into minority and majority. According to Louis Wirth's (in Marshall 1998, 420–421) "classic" definition, a minority group is "a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination."

Against this background, social art constitutes a class of noninstitutional practices that form a base for cultural democracy and inclusive social structures. The functions it may fulfill in this context include the broadening of the public sphere, creation of social discourse and imagery, expression of social conflicts, construction of situations of reciprocal communication (dialogue), facilitation of the process of learning about the Other, reorganization of public space, either symbolic or material, and facilitation of the process of social therapy. Analysis of art's efficacy in relation to social inclusion should not be narrowed to art created by the excluded (from different aspects of social reality, including art itself), but rather focus on the possibilities of changing the rules of social exclusion, extending the chances of democratic participation, and stimulating cre-

ative and reflexive subjective action. The research encompasses three types of minorities, defined by their cultural status (women, the elderly, children and youths, gays, and lesbians), economic status (underclass, communities of former State Agricultural Farms, and of urban ghettos), or specific circumstances (disability, health problems, especially mental illness, imprisonment, refuge, and immigration).

Nearly all cases of social art engaging minority groups that were approached in the research fall into the category of assistance and/or advocacy. Such undertakings are intended to create opportunities for participation in culture in the narrow sense,¹⁵ and for expression of the group's experiences, needs, and interests in the public sphere with the use of artistic means, and—not so rare a case—also of the engaged artist's social capital (access to art institutions, position within artistic circles). To a varied degree, these activities fulfill the subsidiarity rule, which means that the support provided is supposed to strengthen the citizens' activity, and not to lead to their dependence. In the case of social art, this rule operates through the (1) creation of situations in which participants act on their own, and receive support only when it is necessary; (2) delegation of creative prerogatives and decision-making to the participants; and (3) recognition of their initiatives, proposals, and opinions. Hence, fulfillment of the subsidiarity rule is connected to the democratization of the action, of the artistic process, and—in the end—of art as such. This, in turn, allows a better understanding of local or environmental conditions, a higher level of accuracy of the initiated actions (their correspondence with social needs), and acceptance on the part of the group, which results in wider participation and positive reception by the audience or community. This is how an artist engaged with a group of disabled people explains this rule:

There's a place for their ideas. The group is open. I'm the one who puts on the fire. [...] The one who makes sure that the energy is flowing. This is mutual satisfaction. [...] In case of this group, provoking some experiences meets with friendly openness. They join, they cooperate, sometimes they only follow, other times they create by themselves. I can see their transformation, and this makes me feel that the whole thing is important. Because

I can see that they don't get reliant on me. They just feel well in a situation, in which they can do what they want. And they can do a bit less than when they were in good health. And they are excluded, too. Due to their creative activity they join in different circles, which are normally beyond their reach. An art piece of theirs was presented abroad, and it gives me satisfaction that I can be used as a multipurpose door. We were invited, as a group, that is me and the group. Somebody accepted this formula of work, and few days ago our sculpture was bought at an arts fair. [KN13]

Subscribing their actions to the subsidiarity rule, practitioners of social art define their goals in terms of: (1) greater fulfillment of cultural needs of diverse social groups, which in turn allows counteracting cultural deprivation¹⁶; (2) strengthening of informal social networks within a group or community, and opening channels for exchange with the outer environment, which can be seen as creating positive social capital (see Putnam 1993); (3) providing participants with tools that they may use to change their own life, such as therapy, education, assistance, and chances for self-development; (4) broadening participation—in artistic endeavors, and—via art—in public life; and, finally, (5) representation of the excluded, dependent, and stigmatized social categories. Above all, social art in minority groups is aimed at: involving these groups in public activity, broadening their repertoire of activity with artistic means and forms, and strengthening their conviction that they can act, that is, can shape their own situation and their environment. Thus, in minority contexts, social art practitioners pay a lot of attention to participants' self-esteem as a base for feeling worthy, their social competence as a base for integration, and public performance as a base for empowerment. A street worker explains:

One of our tools is a kids' project. They may take pictures, or make a film, but they always have to do something complex, [...] and take it to the end, achieve some result. [...] And then comes this moment [of public presentation] when they can feel really proud of themselves, and this is extremely important to them. And still another reason to run these projects is to teach them some social skills [...]. So that they can see, after months of work, that they can deal with it on their own. [KN10]

On the other hand, the empirical material collected in the research presents a wide spectrum of cases in which social art is applied as an advocacy tool. Within this framework, art is used to prevent stereotyping; bring minorities into public view; symbolically elevate their social status; mediate their needs, problems, and interests; or show alternative visions of social reality (as tolerant, inclusive, multicultural). However, it is important to note that advocacy usually means performing in somebody else's name. An artist photographer points to this problem:

It seems to me that after all it is my voice, not theirs. They do participate in it, they do agree with it [...], but still each of these two statements [photographic participatory projects] is a statement of mine, and I don't give voice to individual persons. These are my reflections, my vision of the world, rather than giving voice to someone else. [KN8]

Hence, advocacy, as a function of social art, does not pair with full empowerment of the participants. However, in the case of some groups, such as the intellectually disabled or mentally ill, it is perhaps the only possibility for including them into the public sphere. Therefore, the interviewees claim advocacy to be an important function of social art. Especially that, by advocacy, they mean not only representation of particular disadvantaged groups, but also articulation of more general issues, values, or ideas. Considering this, antidiscrimination actions (workshops, campaigns) or intercultural education may well be seen as advocacy.

Compared with public space and local communities, social art in the minority context implies a different set of goals, such as assistance and advocacy; specific strategies, such as participation, therapy, integration, education, and expression; as well as distinguishing ethical questions, such as how to help, and not hinder, who has the right to represent a minority, if not themselves, or how to ensure empowered participation. Seen as "art for multiculturalism,"¹⁷ social art broadens possibilities for exerting cultural rights, which refer to participation in culture, as well as civil rights, which are connected to participation in public life, of diverse groups, including those who normally cannot take part in the democratic process, such as the intellectually disabled.

Conclusions

Generally, my aim in this chapter has been to propose and briefly describe an alternative approach to art that problematizes its civic functions (effects), regarded as the social benefits and social innovations that it may produce. The picture of social art in Poland that I have drawn here, partly with the use of interviewees' voices, allows us to see it as an innovative civil practice, in which art is used to bring about pro-democratic social changes. Fulfilling a wide array of civil functions, which have been analyzed in this chapter in the contexts of public space, local communities, and minority groups, social art practices exert an observable and noticeable influence on civil society and, ultimately, improve the quality of democracy—defined not as a system of government based on majority rule, but as a form of organization of social life in all its dimensions that stems from common participation.

Scrutinizing these sort of practices, one has to acknowledge that they constitute a very wide and varied empirical category, and that the civil effectiveness of these practices depends on a number of factors, which include framing the aims of action (expert vs. participatory), mobilizing strategies (top-down vs. bottom-up), modes of participation (manipulation vs. delegation), continuity (one-time vs. long-term), the ability to make use of the participants' potential (dependence vs. inner resources), and power relations (advocacy vs. empowerment). Nevertheless, I believe that the research findings presented in this chapter clarify that economic utility or profit, which nowadays is more than often expected of artistic and cultural practices, is not an adequate measure of their social relevance. Art proves to be effective in many a socially oriented way, which brings it closer to the ideas and practices of civil society rather than of economic markets. Hence, to look at the social benefits and innovations introduced or enhanced with the use of art, I have proposed a return to Bourdieu's notion of social art, as opposed not only to canonical, and avant-garde, art, but also to commercial art, and a revision and operationalization of this notion as a form of civil practice defined by its aims/results, participants, modes of engagement, sphere of occurrence, and qualities.

Notes

1. See, for example, Bishop (2006, 2012), Burnham and Durland (1998), Finkelppearl (2001, 2013), Lacy (1995, 2010), Kester (2004), and Thompson (2012).
2. The research was based on interpretative methodology and theoretical sampling. The cases that fell into the research sample were presumed instances of social art, as it was theoretically modeled beforehand, approached from the perspective of their different partakers. The research sample comprised 115 interviews, which were carried out both in big and mid-sized cities, including Białystok, Bielsko-Biała, Gdańsk, Lublin, Suwałki, and Warsaw, as well as in small towns and villages, such as Brok, Hieronimowo, Ładne, Krasnopol, Mielezki, Mursk, Sejny, Szamocin, Teremiski, and Wigry. However, it is important to note that the research sample was framed neither on a given geographical pattern, nor on the socioeconomic characteristics of the interviewees. Instead, I resorted to the techniques of snowball and triangulation. The only frame for building the sample was the division into three contexts of social art: the public space, local communities, and minority groups, which I also refer to in the subsequent parts of this chapter. Finally, because the practices of social art tend to be largely diversified, I decided to use as a research tool the unstructured interview, facilitated through a list of research questions and instructions for the field researchers. Apart from myself, the interviews were carried out by my students: Izabela Adamska, Paulina Sadowska, Jolanta Antosiak, Katarzyna Klimaszewska, Magdalena Rynda, Anna Sierocka, Urszula Walukiewicz, Dorota Dmochowska, Kacper Kirej, and Jan Wyspiański.
3. For analysis of the distinction between social art and public art, community art and activist art, see Niziołek (2009).
4. Practices that combine artistic expression with social or civil intention have frequently been dismissed by the art world as nonart, even if they were adopted by professional artists (see, for example, Lacy 1995).
5. See Offe (1985).
6. The term “new communities” has been introduced by Peter Drucker (2011).
7. Especially, if the group or organization represents a minority or supports creative individuals.
8. Note that attitudes are complex phenomena in their own right and can be analyzed in terms of their cognitive, emotional, or behavioral aspects.

9. The research was focused on the practice of community art.
10. As I have already mentioned, within the research framework, information was collected using in-depth interviews, to enable the researcher—in accordance with a Weberian interpretative paradigm—to better understand, and not simply measure, the phenomena under scrutiny.
11. Using Alberto Melucci's (1985) term, the critical function of social art is connected to the creation of a symbolic challenge.
12. The codes in square brackets are used to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees. The citations from the interviews have been translated from Polish by the author.
13. This popular term refers to the shortage of state-sponsored cultural institutions in the Polish province, as well as their anachronistic modes of operation, which make them insufficient in supplying for communities' cultural needs.
14. We speak of "phantom activity" when the potential of an organization cannot be fully exploited.
15. In a broad, anthropological sense, participation in culture refers to the entirety of human social experience, while culture is treated as a general pattern of this experience that is characteristic of a given society or some part of it (e.g., ethnic group or social stratum). In this sense, one cannot be excluded from culture; each human being participates in some culture and adheres, not necessarily in a conscious manner, to some cultural patterns. In a narrow sense, participation in culture is linked to such categories as cultural consumption, cultural activity, and lifestyle. Hence, it refers only to selected aspects of participation in culture in the broad sense, in particular: creation and reception of art, contact with cultural institutions and choice among their offers, consumption of products of cultural industry, as well as cultivation of cultural traditions and preservation of cultural heritage.
16. By "cultural deprivation" I mean here an incapability to fulfill cultural needs that are connected to access to culture, participation in creation of culture, and cultivation of cultural differences, which is determined by the social position and social capital of an individual.
17. "Art for multiculturalism," as contrasted with "multiculturalism in art" (seen merely as a topic of art), is art that refers to diversity as the primary and indispensable human condition, and feeds on the experience of cross-cultural contact and communication (see Niziołek 2011).

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- IA11: Male, 31 years old, higher education, street artist, active also as a cultural animator, curator, and editor, conveys street art workshops, cofounder of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that operates in this field (interviewed in 2011).
- IA17: Male, 35 years old, secondary education, graphic designer, cofounder of an NGO that operates in the field of street art, initiator of community actions, urban activist (interviewed in 2011).
- IA18: Male, 33 years old, higher education (sociologist), freelancer, author of collaborative murals, stencils, and billboards, as well as net-art and film projects, occasionally engaged in community and participatory actions (interviewed in 2011).
- IA33: Female, 40 years old, higher education in arts, painter, initiator of socio-artistic activities in the fields of street art and community art, educator, founder, and leader of an artists' collective (interviewed in 2011).
- KK1: Male, 30 years old, higher education, dancer, choreographer, cofounder of a dance school and of an NGO that promotes street culture (interviewed in 2010).
- KK13: Male, 44 years old, secondary education, cultural organizer, documents and promotes art in the public space, leader of an NGO that operates in this field (interviewed in 2010).
- KN10: Male, 32 years old, higher education (philosophy), street worker, works in a poor neighborhood of a big city (interviewed in 2010).
- KN13: Male, 43 years old, higher education in arts, sculptor, initiator of community projects in a big city, instructor of an art therapy group (interviewed in 2010).
- KN5: Male, 26 years old, higher education (sociologist), cultural organizer, independent musician (interviewed in 2011).
- KN8: Male, 28 years old, higher education in arts, photographer, implements photographic projects in various minority contexts (interviewed in 2011).
- PS2: Female, 32 years old, higher education in arts, visual artist, also creates performative actions in the public space and participatory Internet projects (interviewed in 2011).
- PS20: Female, 15 years old, pupil, lives in the countryside, participator in a community photographic project (interviewed in 2011).

- PS21: Female, 34 years old, higher education in arts, cultural animator, leader of a cultural NGO in a big city, implements projects oriented toward the aesthetics of public spaces in the countryside (interviewed in 2012).
- PS22: Male, 40 years old, technical secondary education, graffiti writer, ecologist, social activist (interviewed in 2011).
- PS27: Twin sisters, 16 years old, pupils, live in the countryside, participants in creativity workshops and aesthetic interventions in a village space (interviewed in 2012).
- PS39: Married couple, softys (43 years old, vocational education) and his wife (36 years old, secondary education), observers of a socioartistic project implemented in their village (interviewed in 2012).
- PS7: Male, 33 years old, higher education in arts, artist, curator, lecturer in an arts school, creator of net-art projects and interventions in the public space (interviewed in 2011).

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6

A Plea for Responsible Art: Politics, the Market, Creation

Antoine Hennion

Being deliberately provocative and socially critical, Contemporary Art is a magnet for constant debate, controversy, and scandal. Nevertheless, this turmoil does not imply that Art itself is open to criticism—quite the contrary: it seems that the more Art is criticized, the more it has achieved its goal. This puts social sciences in a peculiar position. In order to provide their own analyses of Art, Economics and Sociology focus on markets, organizations, networks, institutions, or conventions in Art. In so doing, they carefully leave aside its products. This is efficient in a first moment. But how far this stance may be sustained? Is it that, for social sciences, Art is an activity whose products themselves would not matter? Is the Art market a market where objects are arbitrary? Is the Art amateurs' milieu a network of actors only interested in sharing codes?

Based on an emblematic event, I will underline a series of paradoxical consequences of such premises: economists' and sociologists' relentless

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effort *not* to address Art's value makes them reduce Art to an expensive speculation or to a gratuitous social game. Both disciplines' criticism then itself deserves due criticism. My contribution will finally suggest that, by making it a public problem and the result of an inquiry, a pragmatist approach may help address the complicated issue of both *evaluating* and *valuing* Contemporary Art. Reciprocally, this leads to another sort of social critique, which demands that Art confront its responsibility: how does it empower people, give form to emerging identities, and express critical issues? Is Art in capacity of making people and things *exist more* (Souriau 2009)?

Let me start with a picture that has stuck in my mind. During the exhibition of Jeff Koons' work in the halls and gardens of the Chateau de Versailles in 2008, an innocent photo appeared in the press showing the artist and his host, Jean-Jacques Aillagon, the freshly named president of this prestigious domain, descending a beautiful staircase, side by side, with an air of fulfillment. In what was, perhaps, the reflex of a sociologist, the candor of the image itself struck me. A one-time Minister of Culture and ex-Director of the Centre Pompidou, Aillagon had, just a few years previously, been the advisor to François Pinault, President of the Artemis group, then Managing Director and Executive of the Palazzo Grassi, the magnificent palace in Venice purchased and renovated by Pinault in 2005 to exhibit his immense collection of contemporary art, including major works by Jeff Koons. The triumphant association of these two men, thereby, took on an altogether different kind of troubling aspect than the exhibition itself: Art circles, corridors of power, trading floors and cultural fairs, wealthy clubs, and commercial networks, nothing was missing from the picture. We are far from a critical state (in every sense of the term), far from the bohemian, rebel, or revolutionary painter of the end of the nineteenth century. Even if the contemporary art world is willing to paint a self-portrait by cheaply transposing the image of the cursed artist, the reality is quite the opposite. It benefits from all the glory, general recognition, cultural prestige and public success, and unflinching support from the narrow yet solidary worlds of money and power, critics, and institutions; and if things are still hard for most artists, those who now hold the upper hand are the advocates of the avant-garde.¹

My intention is not to echo the reactions that the colored leather pouches and the metallic animals that the king of Neo-Pop Art suspended in Versailles before the gilded panels (which hark back to the grandiosity of the seventeenth century) did not fail to provoke, in the strongest sense of the word. The usual controversy followed. The critics were not shy in expressing their views—though actually in a rather fair and moderate tone: indignation at the outrageous insult inflicted upon the heritage (“it’s shameful!”), or in a more original way, an insult to Koons: the monumentality of Versailles would not do justice to the aesthetic beauty of his work, the effect being due to the size of the pieces in relation to the dimensions of the exhibition venue—the anachronistic mobilization of the great unsung artists (“like Manet in his day . . .”); amused indifference (“that’s funny”), pouts and nods from the in-crowd (“that’s interesting”); mass irony or erudite condemnation: here, without warning, Jean Clair’s reaction in *Le Figaro* (September 11, 2008): “Meanwhile, Jeff Koons has become one of the most expensive artists in the world. The mutation is due to transformations within the Art Market which, once regulated by the subtle interplay between connoisseurs, gallery directors on the one hand and collectors on the other, is today a mechanism for high finance speculation between auction houses like Sotheby’s or Christie’s, and the uncultivated and tasteless nouveaux riches. [...] The consecration came from Versailles. We exhibit it there, we celebrate it there, we lease it there, and tomorrow we will perhaps sell it there. The now customary game of speculation: we guarantee very ephemeral programs and very high risk with a gold reserve called National Heritage.” Finally, the event may inspire official defense of the creation or, contrary to the emphasis of other artists on the simple posture or the purity of the concept, an appreciation of a work well-executed in a return to the simple, popular taste. And I hardly dare add mere aesthetic enthusiasm to this list of reasons, so much it could seem old-fashioned.

What good is commentary anyway? It merely serves to advance the artist’s celebrity and popularity. These “scandals” are perpetuated without anyone present really believing they are still scandalous. How can one respond to these high rollers who are, themselves, virtuosos of self-deprecation? They need neither to be defended nor to be attacked. To worship them or to criticize them is to incessantly reinforce them. In this

instance, the artist openly dresses up as a Trade Representative: the state clerk hands over a commission to his previous employer's favorite artist. These are most certainly the links between Art and Politics, smugly spread out on this staircase, but in the most detestable way: Politics as the unprincipled arrangement of the powerful—alas, who can say that Politics has not done everything to deserve this disparaging connotation?—as when one ends up whispering these words knowingly: “It’s politics.”

“It’s Politics”

Is there a more stimulating way to couple the association of Art and Politics? Protesting in outrage would seem misplaced, just as an impassioned plea for contemporary audacity or a raised eyebrow at a conflict of interests would. The problem is not so much about reformulating such repetitive arguments, as it is about understanding their powerlessness, the feeling they leave us of pushing on a rope. Polemics or inflamed op-ed articles are, absolutely, a part of the game—they nourish and reinforce it. The existence of protests from philistines is reassuring, as in our Koons’ Versailles event: “If it is about a veritable accomplishment, perfectly mastered by the Artist, the exhibition raises, nevertheless, many debates. [...] During] our visit, a mini protest against Koons and the exhibition occurred in front of the Chateau, demanding that he exhibit his work in Disneyland!” “Audacious, courageous, ambitious,” the exhibition was chronicled with enthusiasm on the website: “A crazy idea, orchestrated by Jean-Jacques Aillagon, Elena Geuna and Laurent Le Bon, with the *complicity* of the main person concerned: Jeff Koons, emblematic figure of the Avant-Garde of this century and *undeniably* one of the greatest living artists. [...] Jeff Koons selected the pieces himself. He was then able to perfect their adequacy for the space as part of a logic of *delicate provocation*, born of the confrontation between the historical heritage of the Chateau and the popular character they evoke” (my emphasis). In a more web-like style, the debate continues on the site: “a big, dirty, gringo, crap, dollarized for cultureless carpetbaggers like you.” The notion that these polemics might change the situation does not touch anyone. Such exchanges mimic holding a public debate but there is no real debate.

One must take measure of the singular character of the situation. Just look at the present climate of contestation anywhere else. We are in a time when one cannot decide on anything without a commission, declarations from political parties, unions and churches, expert opinions, and the taking of intellectual sides. Be it the trajectory of a motorway or the age of retirement, a law on the *burqa* or the construction of a wind turbine, the reintroduction of a bear into the Pyrenees, or prenatal genetic testing, there will be an avalanche of conflicting stances and the mobilization of “concerned publics,” as John Dewey put it (1927), in a thousand unpredictable surroundings, from the Senate to the media to the street. We are at a time when no religious, moral, social, academic, or political authority can wrap itself in any one flag without being immediately contradicted. Yet, as in Asterix and Obelix, one Gallic village remains which resists all genuine challenges: Contemporary Art. In feeding off its own constant self-questioning, it has found the blind spot of criticism, the part beyond its reach. Art dynamically envelops every debate, including those concerning itself in such a way as to escape debate. With the announcement of its death, Art enjoys a good lifestyle—and a good laugh.

This is what struck me about the press photo from Versailles: whether stooges or geniuses, these personalities are out of reach. Be it by election, judgment, or contest, they are answerable to nothing (and no one), and this is what perfectly defines them. They have achieved a level of absolute autonomy, which modern artists could only have dreamt of—but the outcome is probably not what they had fought for. This is not solely due to the arrogance of the fashionable artists. Recently, I sat on a panel in which the curator of a large national museum was also participating. She epitomized another sphere of contemporary art, the institutional rather than the public, the exclusive world of experts and insiders. Her attitude toward the *nondebatable* status which art has acquired, though in another form, was just as crude: “it’s awful,” “no,” “yeah, it’s a bit like such and such though ...,” or even just a simple pout, and so on. Verdicts were passed, categorical and definitive, as if the very idea of an argument, suggesting that the judgment was questionable, would have seemed preposterous. The disagreements can, or must, be as violent as possible. They do not require justification. Does this mean that art, now entirely political, though necessarily political in its content (the topics it addresses, the

social criticism which it feeds upon, the continuous questioning of its own state, etc.), has itself become absolutely apolitical? All art is politics, but the art itself is no longer political if it cannot be discussed as such. To say it in another way, except in totalitarian regimes, it is always in the name of Art that Art is critiqued. The critique may be based on no principles but its own; no other critical lenses can be employed in contrast to those now vigorously applied to Science, the family, schooling, and, of course (always the first to suffer), Politics.

If we incriminate Koons himself, as the blessed Artist of billionaires and large audiences, is that contrasting him with the purer, more authentic, and sincere artists? That would be getting rid of the problem a little too quickly, by denouncing only Contemporary Art's most outrageous events. Beyond the success of somebody or another is the question of the art's autonomy, which is bluntly posed. If the victory of the beautiful ideal of "art for art" has been bought at great cost, one must measure the effects it has had on the very possibility of a shred of shared judgment. The need of the aesthetic for a relentless pursuit of the new and a continual rupture, a rejection of any standard being adopted is a defensible position. But it is important to analyze the paradoxical consequences, the less desirable ones, of an avant-garde logic turned norm. How can one class an artist as easy and commercial, or as serious and important, without this judgment itself resting upon a definition of what an artist must be, a question which is completely identifiable and open to criticism? It is the case here for Koons—and I acknowledge having presented an exhibition that highlights his most shocking features. There is not one of these features that cannot be seriously defended by simply opposing to any critical judgment of its own inherent conservatism, or the pseudo-freedom from narrow, mundane art critics, or the freedom enjoyed by the market compared with the conformism of the new "state" art and so on. It has now become the norm that Art's entire collective system works, on the one hand, on the total commitment of its members behind one artist or movement, while on the other hand, by categorically forbidding itself to construct any sort of stable evaluative criteria, which would be synonymous with a return to an academic definition of Art. Each can attack the other as the bearer of a neo-official art

form, but inversely, there is no position extreme enough to uncover the hidden traditionalism inherent within, while, as with Jeff Koons (and others such as Damien Hirst, and before them, the currents that were favored by most contemporary museums and the international market, such as minimalists or conceptual art), commercial success, elective affinities from those in power, or favor within the media is not enough to disqualify any artistic approach. In this game of mirrors, each side can be read as comprising an ironic or displaced, critical action of the other's pretentiously radical conformity.

This is nothing new. It has often been traced in a complicit or critical mode, from inside or outside the art world—notably in France during a quarrel in Contemporary Art, provoked in 1996–97 by the issue number 19 of *Krisis* (“Art/Non-Art?”), which had comprised contributions from J.-Ph. Domecq, J. Baudrillard, and J. Clair, and to which *Art Press* answered. The debate, which authors such as M. Fumaroli (1991) had already launched earlier, has often been taken up again—see L. Danchin, Y. Michaud, or N. Heinich.² However, it has seldom been linked to the essential political questioning of the need for holding debate on issues that are communal. Such a need for publicity directly opposes the need (just as meticulous and legitimate) to preserve the autonomy of Art5. The inability to find even the slightest agreement on a shared definition opens up, not only, a free space for creation without constraint and with only self-imposed rules; it also does away with the idea of debate in favor of the absolute freedom of the creator. This incapacity reinvents a constrained and quasi-military geography of positions (this is the meaning of the word “polemic,” as distinct from “debate”); this politics is reduced to power relations of feuding factions: there are winners and losers, the elected and the excluded, the conquerors and the conquered. It is the same for the art lovers (or should we say “consumers?”): if there is no reason to love something (which does not mean it will not be loved), all that remains is the logic of belonging (“I am part of it!”), or the trivial fear of seeming like a “has been.” The autonomy here consists of restoring the good old dictum *De gustibus non est disputandum* (“there is no accounting for taste”), but in the form of a mimicked dictum blindly governing a small sphere which overrates its internal differences.

"It's the Market!"

From this diagnosis, one can see where the analysis is heading: "let's forget about Art and talk about power and the market." Would the invisible hand of the market, in profiting from the particularities of artistic work (a high degree of uncertainty about the work's value as well as about the buyer's preferences), favor speculation, leading to a hyper-selective and arbitrary concentration of actors and goods? Or the creation of an elite group, closed in on itself, having skillfully managed to play with political uses of art through those in power, with media fascination for celebrity culture and with the unflinching support of art lovers attached to Art's radicalism, as if, paradoxically, this radical character that they recognize within the work itself paralyzes their own critical capacity? Beware danger! We are approaching the realm of Sociology. It's not a good sign. I'd rather hold back on these interpretations than follow their lead. The following paragraphs must be read as if put between quotation marks. They open the floor to the economist and the sociologist without granting them any privileges. For if their perspective opens a very critical view on Contemporary Art, the inverse is also true: the question of art puts their disciplines to the test, and they are not sure to have the last word.

It is extremely tempting to say that in these conditions, we do not need exegesis on the aesthetic but rather a socioeconomic analysis. As soon as it was pinned down, the nature of art's autonomy changed. It is now the autonomy that the alliance between the art market which is controlled by a handful of wealthy buyers and a closed circle of curators provides to a few well-known artists, who also benefit from France's benevolent cultural politics of State patronage and, worldwide, from the appetites of foundations and urban planners—all cities dream of having their very own Guggenheim. The market of the art lovers is bypassed, the general public comes to the rescue of "success"—just like at the circus, they applaud and whistle at the exhibitions without asking themselves why it is *these* artists whom the museums, foundations, private collections, and auctions diffuse everywhere and not any others. Far from the open market as we might have hoped, the new buyers from emerging nations are eager to acquire the very best, while ignoring traditional art enthusiast's criteria and focusing solely on the big names, highlighting the closed

nature of the “open” market. A closed community inflates its rarefied values by passing the burden of estimation back and forth among the members, each reassuring himself or herself by relying on the fact that the other seems to be following suit. As with subprime mortgages, if the bubble is not bursting, it is swelling, and with it, the ego (and bank accounts) of the insiders—all the while, the gap widens between the officially endorsed and the rest of the artists.

I neither support nor refute this analysis—I am just putting it on the table, for the record. It has the merit of shifting the question of the relationship between Art and Politics away from just assuming a position about one artist or another, where the spectator finds himself or herself trapped and unable to get out: “[Y]es, that’s your opinion, but it can be discussed. Others think it’s great and this very debate is what makes it so won-der-ful ...” An economic approach like the former highlights a wider system than this game of elective affinities. It focuses on the effect of the invisible market, which, although far beyond the capacity of any participant to control, decides their choices and produces a speculative rarefication of the glory of the few.³ Does one realize that it adds to the mystery more than it clarifies it? The very term “Art market” is misleading. It suggests a simple mechanism that lets the relationship between supply and demand gradually reveal the true value of goods. This implies that, on the one hand, the quality of the works themselves can be perceived with even the slightest transparency and that, on the other, the tastes of the public are sufficiently affirmable that the joyous union of supply and demand could be a standard for valuing the artworks.

But all analysts have shown that the art market works in completely the opposite way: the inability to evaluate the quality of the creation before it imposes itself by modifying the criteria of its own evaluation, while explicitly refusing to follow any trend or respond to any demand—the symmetric complexity of amateur taste which seeks not so much to be satisfied as upset, confused, taken aback, and pulled out of their comfort zone; thus, hyper-active market intermediaries are constantly on the lookout for microsignals, hoping that an unexpected connection will lead to varying degrees of success (dealers and galleries, collectors and curators, critics and experts). From the Whites (1993) to R. Moulin (1987, 1992) and P.-M. Menger (op. cit.), it’s the cavalier summary of the

Sociology of Art which notably showed the continual sliding of the modes of evaluation for the artwork, from *compagnons* and craft guilds in the Middle Ages and academia from the seventeenth century, to the market nowadays, once governed by the coupling of merchants and collectors (late nineteenth century), then by the alliance between curators and galleries. We are faced with the antithesis of the neoclassical model, according to which the market should meet (at a minimum of cost) preferences and goods that are (at least virtually) present. The explanation is clear, but the art market “explained” in this way no longer contains either “art” or “the market”: free reflection to and fro between agents merely produces arbitrary value. Speculation is exactly that, a market without purpose—but according to good economic theory, this is the opposite of an efficient market! Faced with an artwork, like sociology, economics finds it wiser to decide that the objects do not matter. By a curious paradox, economics obeys the general taboo; it recognizes the imperial sovereignty Art has acquired, and that access to artistic objects is forbidden to outsiders.

“It’s the market!” Indeed, this response is no more satisfying than getting rid of the question of value altogether by saying “It’s Politics!” It’s anything but an explanation, and it is the least economic it could be. So we must inverse the questioning: as much as the general concept of the market sheds light on how the art world functions, it also poses fundamental questions about the market itself even on a practical level (how can the price of a piece be explained?), as well as on a theoretical level (how can one conceptualize the market if it is not based on supply and demand but, contrarily, on allowing uncertain, fluctuating entities to decide its fate?). It is not by accident but by principle that art does not respond to demand. The works and the tastes (unsatisfactory terms precisely because they are too dualistic) create each other, are formed by each other, and can only be defined by their relationship. But not in the passive, mechanical sense, where they would adapt and respond to each other: on the contrary, in a more surprising way where one continually escapes the other. A bit like lovers playing “hard to get”—the lack of response fuels the desire and the deception starts up again. A market indeed. However, a market where the demand is a refusal of the demand(s). This complex mechanism performs very well: each defines and shapes itself at a distance from the other.

This is exactly where the earlier economic response fails. Whereas an analysis of the art market as a training ground for valuing contemporary artworks without reducing it to a speculative spiral would be the true challenge for the discipline, this does not mean that the problem is unsolvable. Far from confronting the dualism between the aesthetic assumption that the pieces have an absolute value, which, systematically, the market would eventually recognize in the long term and the opposite theory of a “social construction” arbitrarily listed by the contingencies of the market, the restitution as a series of very diverse natural tests from the careers of famous painters such as Cézanne or Picasso would, on the contrary, allow for the realization of their “grandeur,” not as undisputable a priori or as an artifact of social affinity, but as an uncertain, nonguaranteed respondent, which is nonetheless becoming more and more resilient on this course, putting the artwork to the test while transforming the criteria for its appreciation. The idea that supply and demand do not pre-exist the market and that there is no sense in separating their relationship is not so paradoxical; it is rather that it is difficult to see justifications to the existence of a law “of the” market other than by Economists earning a good living. Well, if Art shows us this, it’s already a bit political, but not in the way we expected!

“So, Is It Sociology?”

Here, we are going from Economics to Sociology: it is not the Market which makes the merchants but the merchants who make the Market. It is the theory of performativity: from a market seen as a theoretical cause, we pass to the opposite notion of a market that is incapable of explaining anything but capable of producing anything (Callon 1998). The idea is to treat the concrete markets as real, extremely active devices that are labor intensive, demanding of tools and techniques, and not as the imperfect, temporary realization of a higher law that would escape its agents and from which they could not escape. This means that we will leave the economic idealization behind in favor of sociological realism. The battle is not yet won. We first have not to be fooled by the Sociologist’s taste for economic vocabulary (e.g., in P. Bourdieu: capital, investment, profits,

etc.), as their approach is very different. The Economy seeks to detach itself from objects and realities to propose an abstract model, simplified but effective at regulating trade. Sociology seeks to connect to a thick fabric of social relations, the realities and objects, which are always too independent for its own liking. In substance, the sociological theory remains a traditional form of Anthropology, which makes objects only the vehicles of human exchanges, establishing the collective. If neither discipline wants to have anything to do with the objects, they do so on a rigorously contrary basis. The Economy does not invalidate objects, it acquits them—it buys the right to neglect them by just showing how they get value. Sociology cannot confine itself to this assumed ignorance: everything about it is designed to reveal the social nature of all objects.

With regard to Art, this sociological realism will restage everything that holds this world together: work and techniques, institutions and circuits, schools and tastes, reputations and modes of evaluation, and so on—the amusing result being that Sociology, by principle, will take account of the love of art in neighboring terms to those which have served me in the description of a particular state of affairs: the rules of the milieu, conventions of the art world, the shared values of a collective, the analyses of art from a simple issue to a social game. “You believe it is Art when it is you who make it so.” By exploiting the etymology of the word *illusion* (*in-ludo*, at stake and illusion), Pierre Bourdieu developed an extreme, theoretical version of this approach. Stressing the need to dissimilate common beliefs and the naturalization that they imply about the projection of social differences into objects, he highlighted the rationalizing character of discourses surrounding works of art that, like aesthetics, seek out the principle of Art in the Art itself.

The limits of this radical critique have often been raised. By making the love of Art nothing but denial of social distinction, these critiques then treat Art as a lure. It seems more important, however, to bear in mind that other theories on the Sociology of Art, even if more pacifist or liberal, share similar assumptions with regard to the rapport they have with the works of art themselves. Let’s say that they seek to show, not so much that the objects are illusory, as they are manufactured; instead of unveiling a general system of taste, like Bourdieu, faithful to the realist creed, they reveal everything that makes up this world—the institutions and the

norms, settings and trades, markets and cooperative networks.⁴ Everything but Art! A curious realism if you think about it, which makes it its duty not to take into account what counts for the actors concerned. This exclusion makes reference to one of the founding models of Sociology, that of belief.⁵ More precisely, for Sociology, the objects certainly “count” but not in and of themselves: they are only the material basis of belief, which attributes qualities to them, and the effects of the collective through which they are defined. The global, circular, and negative nature of Bourdieu’s model, which makes human activity a blind quest in vain, in a world where all objects are merely physical crutches for a game of distinction, adds to this view a Pascalian, dramatic grandeur that is perhaps superfluous. If Pascal can base this ascetic disdain for the world here on his faith in the afterlife, it is unclear what sociological inquiry could support the same disdain by Bourdieu (2000), despite his constant claims of the scientific nature of his sociology, as opposed to all the others. On the other hand, when Becker (1982) talks about conventions, Heinich (2006) of values, or, when in Philosophy, Danto echoes ambient sociologism,⁶ they fall directly in line with classical sociology, as a resolutely attributionist theory: the art object itself is not considered as real—the only real thing is that the object counts to those for whom it counts.

I dwell on this sociological position to underline the ambiguity present. Let’s first note that nothing is less pragmatist than this current version of the notion of “social construction.” This master latchkey expression has become the magic word of Sociology, maintaining disastrous confusion between vastly different positions, particularly with respect to the status of objects in question. The formula does not decide between a demonstrative, critical version (in particular, one to denounce the effects of the power it conceals, that objects are only the effects of collective belief) and a pragmatic version showing that, indeed, the facts are “made” (Latour 1999, 21, following Bachelard), that objects are never given, but arise from trials. In one case, they become lures; in the other, they are more and more resilient. In one case, the objects do nothing, and in the other, they attain worth by what they do (James 1912). For Pragmatism, which renounces the untouchable dogma of the dualistic opposition between facts and values, objects are always “objects for ...”: relationships prevail over beings.

Now, we can return to my pragmatist critique of Sociology's sociologism. Agreement on a closed milieu, values that are partly arbitrary, protection by opaque codes, and invisible circuits of reciprocal consecration convey a real proximity between the critiques formed by the opponents of Contemporary Art's deviations and the instruments of analysis put forward by Sociologists. Conspiracy theories hatched by cliques and theories of social construction employ the same terminology.⁷ But the apparent parallelism obscures the underlying divergence. What is for some the indignant denunciation of an abnormal state of affairs (the exclusive world of contemporary art has become a mafia, running on the agreement of buddies and rogues), made on behalf of a conception of Art and highly engaged, is for the others the cold flattening of the operation of a system, formulated from the exterior and carefully unpartisan about the values which circulate in the milieu being studied (the art world is a cooperative network organized to produce objects which are conventionally received and conceived by it as art⁸). In other words, sociology unconcernedly applies to any form of art what those committed polemicists describe as a pathological problem to be quickly remedied. Sociologists are called upon for help by disappointed art fans, in the way a rope supports the hanged: the former are pleased to have completed their analysis, but for the latter, the fact that sociology has been successfully applied to its present state is like a signature on Art's death certificate!

In short, saying "It's Sociology" does not work any better than saying "It's the market." The analysis proposed by Sociology as a general theory of Art bears a suspiciously uncanny resemblance to what those heavily involved actors do to show that something is not Art. This should intrigue. Absurdly enough, Contemporary Art clearly portrays the limits of sociological approaches after those of Economics. The arguments that it gives rise to are all to its credit—and after all that is most fitting with Contemporary Art, which is so sensitive to the idea of doing a performance: in any case, for myself, as a Sociologist, the paradoxical criticism which Contemporary Art makes of my discipline is once again a way to make it do politics! As I said, I am not so much using Sociology to critique Contemporary Art as I am using Contemporary Art to critique Sociology. Keeping in line with Duchamp, Contemporary Art mocks

both itself and Sociology at once, forming the phrase: “Well, go ahead, I only exist because you see it that way? Even and above all if it is to be rejected, I am nothing but the pretext of your polemics? Well, enjoy the results!” Sociological dogma has become the ironic truth of Art. It no longer has any intrinsic value—it has conventional value shared by a milieu. Money circulating between humans—it does not “count” for anything in itself. It is made but it does nothing—it is a token, a counter that carries a value only in those circles which attribute it this value. If that’s all that Art is, it would be easier just to barter with little pebbles.

In doing so, Sociology barely helps us to understand what art is, what it has become, or what it can do or has done. By religiously refusing to judge the quality of artistic products, that is, to make out any difference, Sociology condemns itself to reform the same ceremonial, procedural reading indefinitely, of an objectless activity. Sociology wisely focuses on the fact that Art must be manufactured, produced, put into circulation, and evaluated, but its realism is one-legged: rigid when it comes to social relations that produce the art, it melts when it comes to what the art produces, the object of this tumultuous activity, that is to say, to everything that matters to those for whom Art speaks: not so much Art Work in general as the beauty or force of the works in their plurality; less the products of Art than its *production* in the theatrical sense of the term, the uncertain diversity of what it proposes, manifests, of its events, and its revelations. What else is at stake in Art? The power of evocation and emotion, the richness of new experiences; an upheaval, the shock of calling things into question, the destabilizing effect of a performance, the expression of previously unknown sensibilities, the seeking of aspirations; surrendering before the greatness of an Artist who is incomparable to any peer, the pleasure of experiencing the value of a priceless work—which does not preclude estimation.

Is rediscovering these things desirable or even possible? In short, can one speak of the art market, sociology of taste, and the value of works, but *with* the art itself, instead of automatically canceling out the existence of Art’s objects? Of course, this is still poorly formulated, in a restorative mode, a return to something that will never come back, a withdrawal into aesthetic purity that has become a punctilious autonomy: these are part of the ailments rather than of the remedies. However, the issue can-

not be removed with a sleight of hand like the old reactionaries or moaning aestheticians can: although reworded afresh, we are once again faced with our original problem, the relationship between Art and Politics. Why make Art? Asking what its value is does not mean reducing it to a price or demanding that it have a use. It is about accepting that it is there, in its own finery, and that it is there for a reason. What might the responsibility of an autonomous art form be? What would it respond to? What could it respond to without once again becoming a slave to a commission or a demand, and how would it respond? What use does one have for an art object if it is not to allow it to do something—much more than a simple face-to-face exchange, a relationship like this only comes from our own reactions, those which the work illicit from us: feeling, appreciation, judgment, criticism, analysis, rejection, and so on. We are incapable of appreciating without pricing, or esteeming without estimating. What these words show us is that a work's reality is at once fact and value—to say what it is, is to say what it is worth.

This is the lesson that Pragmatism teaches us: to say that objects are only the series of effects they create is not to say that we must stick to a mercantile utilitarianism. Nor does it imply that in Art's case, we should take sides with the public and put the Artist on the stand to be judged by them (as if the public were more discernable than the artwork), but that the artwork is only as valuable as the effects it produces. A last point: to evaluate this is everyone's job. These three arguments—a value which is an act, the fruit of valuation, not free judgment; an aesthetic channeled through an experience, a value test; and a value resulting from the holding of public debate about common problems—condense in a spectacular way (in Art's case), John Dewey's pragmatist theory (1927, 1934, 1939).

A Plea for Responsible Art

Here we are, at the foot of an insurmountable peak. Can one, must one still try to judge Contemporary Art? Can one do it outside of the polemics it sustains to keep up the good times it enjoys, which are as lively as they are pointless? Is it trying to soil its own sacred autonomy? Are we

stuck between the absolute autonomy, which Art has managed to acquire, forbidding us from appreciating it without going through its own strict requirements, and the general, external analyses, which treat Art as an objectless, social ritual, or a speculative game based on arbitrary values (in both cases, treating the artworks with *indifference*):⁹ Judging means quite the opposite—it means distinguishing the difference. But in the name of what? Once again, our initial question reemerges, that of the evaluation criteria Modern Art has so well criticized for the past century that they have all been completely abolished. If Art is not just produced by a market of signs, it is not just the product of work and risky commitment either. It is also *a product* that cannot be reduced to its producers—it is something that stands alone and imposes its own course. I think that far from bringing forth a paralysis of judgment, or the suspension of the right to noncomplicit, insolent criticism, this state of things has made such a critique more necessary than ever.

It is time I remind the reader of my incompetence, not as a Sociologist refusing to take sides in the name of his status, but simply as a personal admission. At this point, I can only share a lesson taken from my work on taste, the practices of “amateurs” and music lovers, all activities incessantly taken up, and redefined by the unexpected interventions of things themselves, of groups, of emerging sensibilities (Hennion 2007, 2010). The pragmatist perspective is already a kind of answer: knowing what Art is, what it is worth, cannot be proclaimed as a proper definition, whether it comes from the artists themselves, the critic, or the philosopher. Especially if the issues at stake are not clear, nor given beforehand, knowing this must be the result of an independent investigation, as independent as the artist must be to produce it. It must also involve experimentation. Realism in a narrow sense of the term (i.e., exclusive consideration of what seems to be present) is often confused with Empiricism as it is understood to be: an exclusive judgment of the real, based on the effects it has. If a short-sighted realism is blind to Art’s as yet indefinable future, an open Empiricism offers a lot of space for this: facing up to disrespectful, unpredictable, heterogeneous obstacles, which impose a binding rapport on the public. Not “the public” in the restricted, fixed, “realist” sense which measures attendance at museums, auctions at Christie’s and so on, but in the stronger sense afforded to the term by pragmatists, denoting

the republic or a shared space: a heterogeneous assembly of concerned publics, the unfiltered multitudes who come into being as the debate unfolds.

Without a counterinquiry, the autonomy of Art rests solely in the freedom of the artist from all examination of his or her work. No longer a defect, this irresponsibility is now a proud affirmation. The issue is not so much about rediscovering the artwork, which could only have existed in one moment of history, but rather about rediscovering the art object or, better, *the object of the art*¹⁰—highlighting the double meaning of the expression, materiality (which is above all open) and a proposal (an “objective,” an aim, even and especially if the object of the art is in a process of constant redefinition). Is it not a basic, given that autonomy only has meaning when coupled with its necessary counterpart, responsibility? As Robert Schumann wrote, “The laws of morality are also those of art.”¹¹ Indeed, sticking so firmly to the path of “responsibility” means giving up the comfortable conclusion of art’s closing in upon itself. Such a comfort cannot be found in the certainties of past works, nor in the esotericism of “art for art,” closed in on its own principles, nor in the sad irony of artists who only take seriously the fact that their art is not to be taken seriously. Little by little as they became more tenacious in their refusal to obey commands, adhere to demands, and respect the academic canon, the artists have twice “emptied” content from the object of their activity. First, in the material sense, by refusing to stick to the production of a work within the meaning of something fixed, concrete, and enduring, in favor of the gesture that creates it (ready-made, installation, concept, ironic, or friable objects, etc.), and, second, especially in the social sense, by refusing, in a less ostentatious but more decisive way, to have to answer to what they are doing, to be accountable; by insisting on their independence and on the gratuitousness of their gestures (if not of their work), the artist handles with the same ironic distance the expectations of a public and the essential character of the art, whereas the more volatile the work, the more weight their name carries.

Yet nihilism, the cult of the empty, is not the only solution. There is no reason to devise an autonomous art form as an inverted, negative idealism, seeing only the inertia in the material and only the limitations put on creation by the attention of a public. These are knee-jerk reactions,

defensive stances, hidden behind arrogance: they resemble the reaction of judges who, under the pretext that Justice is autonomous, are surprised that the media or Politicians would react to their verdicts; or those of the scholars, indignant that the unlearned would question the future of the planet or the toxicity of certain processes. The naivety of the moderns: for them, to be autonomous means being in a position to answer to no one for one's actions—they learnt the opposite at school, but they forgot it when they became professionals, traders, or “personalities.” In the case of Contemporary Art, at least in its most visible sentiments and its most triumphant proponents, such avoidance borders on cynicism when the contrast between the nothingness of the work and the importance that it garners for its creator is so stark (it can be understood as the same uneasy feeling I was left with by Koons' visit to Versailles).

What remains for me to conclude with is a bet (though one with rather attractive odds), that an inquiry carried out on what Contemporary Art really produces would not confirm this pessimistic diagnosis, and would show that, far from any fascination for nothingness, most of the work done goes in two, exactly opposite directions from it. First, that of an attention toward the matter of things, conceived of and exemplified in William James' famous *pragmata*, “things in the making” (1909, 263)—not as dead weight but as possible expansion, fabric that unfolds, a series of links and resistances which bring about the unexpected. Envisioned in such a way, abandoning traditional artistic formats is not a loss but an enrichment—it does not refer back to this attraction to the emptiness, this cheap aesthetic, but rather it confronts a world which keeps getting filled with things, material, and new connections from which the Artist explores the virtual. Second, this involves an unprecedented attention toward the course of the world—exploration of situations of rupture or of violence, work with the disabled, elderly, or uprooted; activities in prisons, asylums, “sensitive” communities (what an admirable term). This attention can take the naive shape of a support for politics or for the “social” already there, and in this case, far from being more political, it instantly cancels out its own power. Even if all this comes with the cost of mistakes, indulgences, or sometimes even desperate candidness, often it seeks on the contrary of its words, again within pragmatic concerns, to assist those who are uncertain and for whom there is a need to find a means of expression: emerging collectives who are

in need of forms, states that must be learnt in order to be felt and experienced.¹² J. Rancière (2000) also characterizes the other claim of the modernist aesthetic project (next to that of autonomy): “the invention of perceptible forms and material settings of life to come.” Souriau (2009) speaks of art as a “work-to-be-done”, calling for more existence and providing more existence. Art attends to the birth of worlds yet to come, and the Artist is an experimenter of the sensibilities to be produced (Peroni and Roux 2006). These *yet to come* worlds are crucial—it is with this opening of worlds to be made that the Artist introduces what others would never have proposed: the artist is neither a communicator, nor an advertiser of existing social groups, nor a Trade Representative for the oppressed or excluded. From a situation, the artist brings forth an object, and this object then transforms the order of things, causes new ways of seeing things, shifts the formulations, and recreates the relations. The artist does politics via the sensorial, while others do it through thought or action.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: Toward a Propositional Art

At first glance, it looked as if I would conduct a criticism of Contemporary Art, as a social scientist and also from a layman position. Things soon turned to be more complicated. Provocative works, happenings, and installations have already incorporated this criticism, if not explicitly looked for it. So in return, I used Art as a means to criticize social sciences and their way of not addressing value issues, be it explicitly defended or not discussed. It does not mean though that Art is a radical criticism of Society, as aestheticians or amateurs complacently claim. It rather means that, all of us, we have put Art out of reach of any ordinary critical ability. This could lead to quite a negative appraisal, both of Art and of Critique. This is not my point. Quite the contrary: I plea for the need and the possibility of reinstantiating a positive and critical responsibility for Art. It is not a question of returning to the order of a relationship between Art and the Public where the role of each is pre-established, but one involving the explicit organization of a public debate, in the Deweyan use of the term: a debate not about Art, but about

public “concerns,” in which the artist has to play a role. It is not a return to a time where the artist had to provide a product that met a set of specifications: rather, *from* this debate (thus with reliance on the debate itself but also on moving on from it and going elsewhere), the formulation and materialization within which he or she operates changes things. The public is no longer an abstract reference; it consists of participants in experiments. If the artist enters into such a debate, he or she will be burdened with a “concern,” and far from being instrumented, it is he or she who would be, in their own way, capable of giving a “concerned public” the impression of having been transformed—not so as to lose the initial problem, but so as to rediscover it in another form, reformulated, at once handed back to them, and made other—also improving how it is experienced.

And now, an example taken at random just to show that these sorts of practices do exist: the veritable metamorphosis of a blast furnace in the rather grim Lorraine Valley, which, after a lengthy inquiry and numerous controversies (would it not be preferable to bury the past, rather than risk creating a Disneyland of nostalgia?) was created by the artist Claude Lévêque in the Uckange Valley.¹³ This work was not an industrial museum, to show the mines to small children; it was a bold artistic gesture, which demanded recognition by its very advent; often hostile to the process at the beginning, people accepted the monument once its presence was imposed. Here is an Artist who has done something. Not an effigy to a bygone past, nor one made “as if” to restore a lost luster, but a transformation that helped the inhabitants, undone by the collapse of their world, to recognize their past as past: to free themselves from the trap of forgetting or of fixating and to assume it without staying bound to its disappearance. To achieve this not by theoretical analysis or political action, but by the production of an object and the sensation it procures, this is indeed the responsibility of the artist. Like all responsibility, it can only be risked and engaged in the world, in the true sense of the word.

No emptiness, no purism, Art becomes once again what it has always been in various forms, a product which, in itself, produces something. A true object (there is no reason to be ashamed of this word), a brimming object is not a closed one. It is what we lean on, what we are projected onto, what we throw in front of ourselves so that it goes beyond us and comes back to us as “other”—all the while, making us “other.” Bye-bye

Koons! When the artist has become an Artist, they act out their role and they do not make art anymore. After art for the church and art for the king, after art for the bourgeois and art for the market, art for art has thankfully freed itself from any destination that is too real. But to take oneself for an object is just as deadly. Undoubtedly, we must not dream of an “art for x”: some would quickly take charge of substituting that unknown, “little x” for a determined objective—people or tourism, fashion or politics. Perhaps by remembering James¹⁴ afresh, we could simply dream of an “art for ...,” a prepositional art in suspension: debated, public, open, an art not without an object but quite the opposite, one which does not know in advance the object of its work. What else should be politics?

Notes

1. E.H. Gombrich already pointed to this switch, and conversely mocked what he called the “fashionable don’ts,” in “The Vogue of Abstract Art” (Gombrich 1978, 146).
2. In relation to *Video*, a controversial installation, D. Gamboni (1983) had proposed 15 years earlier a very effective analysis of the crisscrossing game of reception, in the form: “[T]here is always an iconoclast or a worshipper who will say ‘anything you can do, I can do better.’”
3. To get away from the aporia of the Sociology of Art when it comes to the question of the value of artworks—is their quality self-generated or “socially constructed”? P.-M. Menger (2009) makes the following argument: an initial small difference recognized by the sociologist (to escape Constructivism) then produces considerable effects, to the point of ending up with an insuperable gap between the great names and the others. In Bach’s case regarding his “grandeur” (a word chosen to contrast with constructivist terminology, like that of “glory,” employed by N. Heinrich (1996) about Van Gogh), we propose another sociological approach to Art value (Fauquet and Hennion 2000).
4. Cf. Moulin and the sociological analysis of the painting market, and H.S. Becker’s way of displaying the whole network of participants of an art world.
5. This is what I developed in *The Passion for Music* (2015).

6. Through the idea that art is always an intentional object: it is not the properties of a work that may deem it art, but the fact that it is designated as such by a milieu—an “art world,” as he also says (Danto 1981)—thus pushing away both aestheticism and the solution as the simple arbitrary subjectivism of tastes.
7. On the limits of sociological criticism and its antiessentialist battle, see the call for a sociology *of* criticism made by L. Boltanski and L. Thévenot (2006).
8. Cooperation, joint products, conventions of an art world, all these echo word for word the theory of Becker (1982, 35) in *Art Worlds*.
9. Menger, anxious to avoid the false economics of critical Sociology, describes the work of the creator as self-fulfillment in a situation of uncertainty, thus finding the joining of the work and the market that Sociology is typically in search of: but how then can we distinguish between an Artist and an Athlete or a Trader?
10. I am recycling G. Genette’s beautiful expression, which speaks of “the work of the art” instead of the work of art (*L’Œuvre de l’art*, 1994).
11. In the preface, he wrote for *Album pour la jeunesse*, op. 68 (1848), destined for young pianists.
12. On this, cf. Latour’s exhibition, *Making Things Public* at the ZKM, Karlsruhe (Latour and Weibel 2005). See also the “Nouveaux Commanditaires” project from the Fondation de France, run by F. Hers (Debaise et al. 2013).
13. “Tous les soleils,” 2007. I elaborate here on the analysis that J.-L. Tornatore proposed about this work and its 16-year gestation period (Tornatore 2010).
14. “Philosophy has always turned on grammatical particles” (James 1912, 60).

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Part 3

Alternative and Critical Art Production and Its Control

7

Artistic Critique on Capitalism as a Practical and Theoretical Problem

Dan Eugen Ratiu

Introduction

This chapter approaches artistic critique on capitalism as a theoretical and practical problem by focusing on recent debates on capitalism, critique, and crisis, prompted mainly by the seminal work of Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, published in French in 1999 and then in English in 2005 with a new Preface. Two axioms of their general model of (normative) change state that critique is a catalyst in transforming the spirit of capitalism and, in certain conditions, a factor in changing capitalism itself. A more controversial conclusion at that time, highlighted on the cover of the French first edition, was that “the real crisis is not that of capitalism but of the critique of capitalism.” This contentious idea ensued from the diagnosis of “neutralization,” “silence,” and even the “end of critique,” both social and artistic; hence, the call for their necessary revival and redeployment (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a,

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324–27, 489–90). Drawing on subsequent interventions by Boltanski and other sociologists on this core issue, including its recent revisiting in the *New Spirits of Capitalism? Crises, Justifications, and Dynamics* (2013), edited by Paul Du Gay and Glenn Morgan, as well as on the notion of “critical attitude” supported by Michel Foucault, I will explore the interactions between the artistic critique on capitalism and its recent dynamics, by discussing the social role of artists in the context of globalized or “network capitalism,” and the imperative toward creativity as a challenge of managerial discourse.

An important task is to clarify what is “critique” and how could it be exercised in its practical sense: which are the historical sources, forms, and manners for criticizing capitalism? Which are the conditions of possibility for contemporary artists to exercise a genuine critique of capitalist order? The main aim of this chapter is, in answering these questions, to disclose the paradoxical consequences prompted by artistic critique on capitalism and its spirit, in terms of the emergence of new norms of excellence and ways of life, those of artists as well as of other “creative” people engaged in capitalist order. It also aims at a reconsideration of the artistic critique on capitalism by taking into account recent developments and controversies about “crisis” and “critique.” Another question is whether a sustainable lifestyle can be formed by a generalization of the artistic model of creative life and excellence. The “creative ethos” has become pervasive since the rise of what Richard Florida hails as the “Creative Age” or “Age of Talent,” with the artists (along with scientists, engineers, designers, etc.) being thought of as an advanced social group, the supercore of a growing “creative class” (Florida 2002, 21–22, 72–77). This imperative toward creativity leads to posing the artist as an exemplary figure of the “worker of the future,” for whom the distinctions between work and nonwork, between work and the person of those who perform it, have become obsolete or disappeared. Finally, there are the questions of whether this “creative lifestyle,” adaptable, mobile, and flexible, could be extended to the entire labor market and social body without costs in terms of insecurity and instability, and whether the artists can contribute to redevelop a particular sense of self-realization and self-fulfillment by their critical demands for creativity and authenticity.

Capitalism, the Spirit of Capitalism, and Critique

In order to accomplish these tasks, I will first draw on the “model of change” of contemporary capitalism proposed by Boltanski and Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005a), notably on the basis of the French example, yet with more of a general overview, which was briefly summarized in a homonymous article published in English in 2005 (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005b). The authors’ account of the classic question of the dynamics of capitalism contains three interrelated “actants”: capitalism, the spirit of capitalism, and critique. Following the Weberian tradition, they put the ideologies on which capitalism rests at the center of their analysis, because ideologies sit at the heart of this three-sided game. Yet, the notion of the spirit of capitalism is not employed in the canonical usages: it is detached from the Weberian substantial content, in terms of *ethos*, to be treated as a form that can be filled differently in different instants in the development of modes of organizing, and it is meant not only to furnish individual reasons but also justifications in terms of the common good (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 10–11; see also, Du Gay and Morgan 2013a, 14). The authors’ key concept of the *spirit of capitalism* designates “the ideology that justifies people’s commitment to capitalism, and which renders this commitment attractive,”¹ while the concept of the “*new spirit of capitalism*” is used by them in order to give an account of the ideological changes that have accompanied transformation in capitalism over the last 30–40 years (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 3, 8–11). Thus, this “spirit,” referring to a distinct set of norms or a legitimizing value system, is strongly related to certain forms of action and one’s lifestyle conducive to the capitalist order (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 10).

It is also worth noting that Boltanski and Chiapello are mainly apprehending “capitalism” through its logic, the dynamics of capital accumulation, and the organization of labor (wage-earning). Therefore, they distinguish between it and the “market economy”: from the various characterizations of capitalism, they retain a minimal formula which stresses the “imperative to unlimited accumulation of capital by formally pacific

means, competition and employment” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 4; 2005b, 162–63). The subsequent idea, imported from the regulationist account, is that capitalism is a blind force that does not find any principle of self-limitation and orientation within itself.

Capitalism’s lack of concern for norms means that its spirit cannot be generated exclusively out of its own resources; as a result, it need its enemies and *critique* to find the moral supports it lacks and to incorporate mechanisms of justice (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 27–28; see also, Du Gay and Morgan 2013a, 15). The “very concept of critique,” according to Boltanski and Chiapello, “escapes theoretical polarization between interpretations in terms of relations of force and of legitimate relations,” and it “is meaningful only when there is a difference between a desirable and an actual state of affairs.” Thus, the critique the authors envisaged is a critique of capitalism as previously defined, that is, centered on economic mechanisms, forms of work organization, and profit extraction, not a critique of “imperialism,” as in some recent redeployments of the critique (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xvii, 27).

There are certainly different conceptions of capitalism in use in social theory. For example, Nancy Fraser, in a recent Jan Patočka Memorial Lecture, entitled “Crisis, Critique, Capitalism – A Framework for the 21st Century” (2013), reexamines the basic theoretical question of how capitalism is best conceptualized, concluding that “an expanded conception of capitalism,” as an economic system, a form of ethical life, and an institutional order, would be “able better to accommodate the multiplicity of crisis tendencies and social struggles that characterize the 21st century” (Fraser 2013). Such a comprehensive analysis of capitalism after a period of neglect of this key concept would be, indeed, desirable. However, the minimalist way in which Boltanski and Chiapello conceptualize capitalism better fits within the limits and purpose of this chapter.

Forms and Manners of the Critique on Capitalism

Capitalism has always faced criticism in different forms and manners, which accompanied its development. Critique with social aims had been

amply deployed from the outset, and also constituted a core issue of the social theory through many analyses that I cannot list here. There are also diverse and significant analyses of the critical side of the artistic activity, which has positioned itself in opposition to the bourgeois way of life associated with the rise of capitalism, and was labeled as “artistic critique” (Graña 1964; Bourdieu 1996; Chiapello 1998). The distinction between two forms of critique on capitalism, *social* and *artistic*, constitutes a *leit-motiv* of Boltanski and Chiapello’s *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, at the point that these coexistent forms of critique seem to be comparatively incompatible (2005a, xii).

A brief overview of the account given by Boltanski and Chiapello of “the historical forms of the critique of capitalism” shows that both were constituted in the nineteenth century but had different sources and levels of expression: the primary one is emotional, such as indignation—a bad experience prompting protest, and the secondary is ideological, that is, reflexive, theoretical, or argumentative. The work of the critique consists precisely in the translation of indignation into the framework of critical theories, and then the “voicing” of it (in the sense conceptualized by Hirschman 1970).

The social critique was inspired by socialists and, later, by Marxists, and is associated with the history of the working-class movement: it denounces capitalism as source of exploitation, poverty, and social inequalities, as well as of opportunism and egoism, demanding instead security, solidarity, and equality. It has a modernist side, when fighting against inequalities, and an antimodernist side, when it is constructed as a critique of individualism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 36–37; 2005b, 175–76).

The artistic critique, instead, originated in intellectual and artistic circles and the invention of a bohemian lifestyle in nineteenth-century Paris, as pointed out by Jerrold Seigel (1986), who underlines the importance attached to creativity, pleasure, imagination, and innovation. Boltanski and Chiapello observe that the artistic critique also foregrounds the loss of the sense of what is beautiful and valuable, which derives from standardization and generalized commodification, and it is based upon a contrast between attachment and stability on the one hand (the bourgeoisie), and detachment and mobility on the other (the intellectuals and

artists). In the authors' view, this opposition constitutes the core of the artistic critique and its paradigmatic formulation is found in Baudelaire (1863/1964). Therefore, the artistic critique denounces capitalism as a source of disenchantment and inauthenticity, as well as of oppression in as much as it is opposed to freedom, autonomy, and creativity of human beings. Along with the antimodernist side that denounces disenchantment, the artistic critique also has a modernist side, which develops demands for liberation, autonomy, and authenticity (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 38–40).

There are also different manners of criticizing capitalism, notably its related tests (see below). The first is a critique with a *corrective* purpose, also called “reformist,” whose intent is to correct and improve established capitalist order (tests) to make it more just. The second manner of critique, which has historically proclaimed itself “revolutionary,” is dubbed *radical* by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, 32–33), as it aims at suppressing the capitalist regime (or tests) and, ultimately, replacing it with a different regime (or tests). As the authors mention, the forms of critique indicated by their analysis are not “revolutionary” but those that might be dubbed as “reformist.” However, these do not exclude radical challenges to the basic values and options of capitalism, as did the artistic critique that shares its individualism with modernity (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xiv, xvi, 39; see also Ratiu 2011, 30–31).

Hence, the distinction revolutionary versus reformist is not superimposable to those between artistic and social critique; neither is the distinction radical versus corrective. Yet, radical critique is often articulated through more creative media, such as art and literature, because “the experiences of injustice or humiliation that are often at the basis of radical critique are difficult to generalize, as existing narratives do not easily dispose of a language to recognize such experiences as unjust” (Blokker 2011, 255).

Finally, it is important to add that according to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, 40–41), there is an “inherent ambiguity of critique: even in the case of the most radical movements, it shares ‘something’ with what it seeks to criticize.” Accordingly, “the dialectic of capitalism and its critiques proves interminable as long as we remain in the capitalist regime.” Despite this, the “voice” critique possesses a certain effectiveness in changing capitalism and its spirit.

Dynamics of Change: The Role of Critique

Two important items of the eight-point axiomatics of the model of change proposed by Boltanski and Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* regard the central role of the critique as a catalyst for change in the spirit of capitalism and, possibly, of capitalism itself: “6: The principal operator of creation and transformation of the spirit of capitalism is critique (*voice*),” and “7: In certain conditions, critique can itself be one of the factors of a change in capitalism (and not merely in its spirit)” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 489–90).

There are some other key concepts to understanding the dynamics of change in capitalism and its spirit or value system: the “city” (*cit * in French) or “justificatory regime,” the “test” (* preuve*) or “proof of worth,” and two modes of action: “categorization” (*cat gorisation*) and “displacement” (*d placement*). To put it briefly, “it is the effect of the critique which allows the spirit of capitalism to change ... [by] finding justifications, which in turn are taken over by capitalism and absorbed by its spirit” (Boltanski, in Basaure 2011, 368). These justifications appeal to the externally normative hold points of capitalism, which are, in essence, the “cities.” This theoretical construct refers to a model of “justificatory regimes” or “orders of worth,” each based upon a different principle of evaluation, and has been developed by Luc Boltanski, together with Laurent Th venot, in an earlier publication, *De la Justification. Les  conomies de la grandeur* (1991), translated into English in 2006 (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005b, 167–69; see also, Basaure 2011, 373, 380).

Furthermore, changes are also changes in test systems. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, 30–32) point out, critique and testing are closely inter-related: the impact of critique on capitalism operates by means of the effects that it has on the central tests of capitalism. These “tests,” upon which the legitimacy of the social order is based, are defined as “privileged moments of judgment, appreciation and thus of selection, remuneration, of positive and negative sanction”; in other words, more or less standardized procedures for confronting peoples’ claims with the real world. This notion allows one to address a key sociological question concerning “the selection

process governing the differential distribution of persons between positions of unequal value, and the more or less just character of this distribution.” There are two different modes of testing: “tests of strength” and “legitimate tests.” However, these are not to be conceived in discrete oppositions, as there is a continuum between them: the test is always a test of strength but will be regarded as legitimate when the situation is subjected to justificatory constraints, which are judged as being genuinely respected (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 30–32; b, 171–72).

The notion of a test is also meant to break with a narrowly determinist conception of the social, thus emphasizing, from the viewpoint of action, the various degrees of uncertainty haunting situations in social life. Each of these two types of tests correspond to a specific mode or regime of action, “categorization” and “displacement,” which describe how testing systems are being transformed (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 30; 2005b, 173; see also, Blokker 2011, 255). To put it briefly, following Boltanski (in Basaure 2011, 376), “in the regime of action called ‘displacement’, the changes always have a local character in that they are situated in a ‘level of immanence’ and are merely objects of ‘limited reflexivity’ without a superior position” (this is mainly related to capitalism as a “blind force”). This is the reason why “the changes caused by the displacement do not immediately lead to a reconfiguration of the categories that structure the representation, especially the legal one, of the social world.” Instead, the “mode of categorization” refers to social *conventions* having a broad-based validity, as well as a certain type of externality, that is, a form of transcendence. For the most part, it is critique that categorizes, “when it interprets, totalizes, and questions the legitimacy of the changes set into motion by the displacements, that is, their claim to comply with the common good,” and, thus, implements the reconfiguration of categories² (Basaure 2011, 376; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005b, 172; see also, Du Gay and Morgan 2013a, 15).

The amplitude of changes set into motion by critique itself depends on the manner of criticism. If a reformist critique might result in the confirmation and strengthening of the existing order, the success of a radical critique, “pertaining to another city,” will involve a shift in dom-

inant arrangements and their justifications (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005b, 162; see also, Blokker 2011, 255). The study of changes in the spirit of capitalism in France between the 1960s and 1990s, through the analysis of management texts that provide moral education on business practices, has revealed a major reorganization in dominant value systems or sets of norms that are considered to be relevant and legitimate for the assessment of people, things, and situations. This change was described as a passage from the “second spirit” to a new, “third spirit” of capitalism. It is worth noting that the third spirit of capitalism is also a new *normative world*, a new universe of justification, epitomized by a new city, the so-called projective city or project-oriented city (*cit  par projet*). In brief, this new city is organized by networks; it emphasizes activity, mobility, adaptability, flexibility, and autonomy (all contributing to the common good) as a “state of greatness” or worth, conceives life as a series of different short-lived projects, and poses the ability to move from one project to another as a standard test (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005b, 164–66, 169–71).

It is also worth adding that this new universe of justification, or the displacement of distinct orders of worth, is related to displacements of the third “actant,” capitalism itself: that is, the emergence of new capitalistic practices as well as new ways of living and working, in relation to justification of the capitalist economy. What Boltanski and Chiapello call the “third spirit” of capitalism is isomorphic with a third form of capitalism, a globalized, “connexionist” or “network capitalism” that employs new technologies, which began to manifest itself during the 1980s (which others dub as “post-Fordism” or “neoliberalism”). This form of capitalism renounces the Fordist principle of the hierarchical organization of the work to develop instead a new network organization, founded on the initiative of the actors and the relative autonomy of their work (but at the cost of their material and psychological security). Most important, it is also related to the increase in and generalization of the new exigencies of the artistic–intellectual professions: singularity, flexibility, adaptability, self-expression, creativity, and inventiveness, which became new models of excellence (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 18–19, 419–20).

The Current State of the Critique on Capitalism: Crisis, Controversies, and Redeployments

This section will closely examine the current state of artistic critique on capitalism and related controversies, and will open up a new question as to its possible redeployments. A thought-provoking, twofold lesson that Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, xv, 324–27) draw from their analyses concerns capitalism's ability to assimilate critique, and the openness of all critique to assimilation, which leads to the "neutralization," "silence," and even the "end of critique." The latter lesson was also displayed in the French first edition of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* in the showy form of a covering thesis according to which the real crisis is that of the critique on capitalism, not of capitalism itself. This diagnosis seems surprising nowadays, as we experience the ongoing crisis (economic, social, etc.) after the financial collapse of 2007–08, and raises some questions. What is the actual meaning of these lessons or theses and their relevance today? What did "critique" and "crisis" entail, afterward?

Nonetheless, this diagnostic becomes understandable when specifying that, in Boltanski and Chiapello's view, it does not refer to the primary level in the expression of any critique, the emotional one, which can never be silenced, but to the secondary level, the reflexive, theoretical, and argumentative one (i.e., ideological) that assumes a supply of concepts and schemes of analysis. According to the authors, the critique of capitalism is in crisis because it has placed itself in the alternative of being either ignored, and thus useless, or recuperated. On the one hand, the social critique related to the second form of capitalism and its spirit was made inadequate and neutralized (ideologically) by capitalism's displacements: too often attached to old schemes of analysis, the social critique has led to methods of defense, henceforth inappropriate to the new forms of redeployed capitalism, the new organization in network, of a connexionist world organized around short-lived projects. On the other hand, the artistic critique, although relevant, has become a victim of its own success and was recuperated: its demands for autonomy, creativity,

authenticity, and liberation were integrated into management rhetoric and utilized by the new spirit of capitalism to support and legitimize its displacements, at least in its historical formulations, which privilege liberation over authenticity (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 36, 324–27, 505–06). In the Preface to the English edition, the authors also underline the changed context compared with the first half of the 1990s, especially concerning critique: ten years after, one could witness “a very rapid revival of critique of globalization,” yet a “virtual stagnation when it comes to establishing mechanisms capable of controlling the new forms of capitalism and reducing their devastating effects.” Hence, the present situation is still paradoxical, being characterized by “an undeniable redeployment of critique and no less patent disarray of that critique” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xvi–xvii).

All these theses of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* have left this work open to all sorts of criticism and controversies. Here, I will address some of them by targeting Boltanski and Chiapello’s point of view on artistic critique and its relationships to capitalism’s order and normative system, as well as to the creative work and lifestyle.

The First Controversy: The Artistic Activity/Critique as a Model for a Neoliberal Economy

There is a controversy as to whether the artistic critique or professional practice is the model from which the third spirit and stage of capitalism (or neoliberal economy) draws inspiration. For example, Maurizio Lazzarato (2007) criticized the “ambiguous discourse” of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* according to which it is claimed that the model of contemporary economic activity is to be found among artists. In rejecting such “misconception,” he further uses Foucault’s work *Naissance de la biopolitique* (2004), namely the idea that neoliberalism does not seek its model of subjectification in the artistic activity/creativity or critique since it already has its own model: the idea of the individual as “human capital,” as an entrepreneur of herself/himself. Hence, it is the figure of the entrepreneur that neoliberalism wants to extend across the board to everyone, artists included (Lazzarato 2007, 1, 4).

Indeed, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) state that the new, third spirit of capitalism has recuperated and appropriated many components of the artistic critique amply deployed at the end of the 1960s: the demands for liberation, individual autonomy, creativity, self-fulfillment, and authenticity, which nowadays seem to be not only widely acknowledged as essential values of modernity, but also integrated into management rhetoric and then extended to all kinds of employments. Hence, their thesis, according to which the artistic critique has, over the last 20–30 years, rather played into the hands of capitalism and was an instrument of its ability to last (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 419–20). A proof would be, by example, the way in which managers made use of such demands in transforming organizational ethos and practices (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 498).

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) and later Boltanski (2008) also emphasize the coupling of the reference to “authenticity” to that of “networks,” assembled in a new ideological figure, that of the *project*, flexible and transitory. This constitutes the core of a new conception of human excellence or value, in fact compatible or reconciled with liberalism, a new societal project aimed at making the *network* a normative model. The artistic critique since Baudelaire promoted a “culture of uncertainty and creativity,” and contemporary art has contributed to this new value system in its own way³ (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xxii; Boltanski 2008, 66–67).

Therefore, the authors refer to artistic critique, not to professional practice in general, as an inspiration for a new normative model. Still, this kind of analysis is not singular. Other analysts (Reich 1991; Florida 2002, 2005; Menger 2002) who were concerned with the interactions between the arts and other worlds of production have also pointed out that since the 1980s, the norms of work have changed following an internalization of the historical values of the avant-garde, autonomy, flexibility, nonhierarchical environment, continuous innovation, risk-taking, and so on, which are the epitome of artistic work, and led to posing the artist as a figure of the “exemplary worker of the future” (Menger 2002, 6–7).

Hence, the framework setup in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* is helpful in theorizing the current normative changes in the art world and other worlds of (creative) production. It also provides a critical standpoint on these changes. In fact, Boltanski and Chiapello take care to report and criticize

some paradoxical effects of the demands of liberation, autonomy, and authenticity, which have been formulated by the artistic critique and then incorporated into the new spirit of capitalism and its displacements. Among such paradoxical effects there are notably the “anxiety” (*inquiétude*) and the “uncertainty” (in a sense that contrasts it with calculable risk) related to the kind of liberation associated with the redeployment of capitalism. This affects all relationships linking a person to the world and to others, and closely linking autonomy to job insecurity or precariousness undoubtedly makes “projecting oneself into the future” more difficult. Additionally, a price for more autonomy and flexibility has been paid with an increase in “instability” and “insecurity.” Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a), in the chapter “The Test of the Artistic Critique,” also call attention to the fact that the introduction into the capitalist universe of the arts’ operating modes has contributed to disrupting the reference points for ways of evaluating people, actions, or things. In particular, it is about the lack of any distinction between time at work and time outside work, between personal friendship and professional relationships, between work and the person who performs it—which, since the nineteenth century, had constituted typical characteristics of the artistic condition, particularly markers of an artist’s “authenticity” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 422–24).

Moreover, as the two French sociologists underscore in the Postscript of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, entitled “Sociology *Contra* Fatalism,” in the third stage of capitalism, or post-Fordist condition, the new constraints are, in fact, accompanied by new liberties (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 535–36; see, also, Graw 2008a, 11). As Isabelle Graw (2008b, 78) puts forward, it is a better solution to avoid the total “co-optation” scenario and to acknowledge the valuable accomplishments made by the artistic critique and emancipatory movements of the 1960s and 1970s in terms of “autonomy” and “self-realization.”

The Second Controversy: The Role of Artistic Critique Versus Social Critique

Another controversy concerns the nature and role of artistic critique, compared with social critique, and focuses on the question of whether these forms of critique oppose each other and are incompatible. According

to Lazzarato, “both the definition of what exactly the ‘artistic critique’ is and the role the authors assign to it in contemporary capitalism are puzzling in many respects”; therefore, their concept of “artistic critique” does not hold up for theoretical as well as political reasons (Lazzarato 2007, 1–2). He first disproves the thesis that runs throughout *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, that the artistic critique and the social critique “are most often developed and embodied by different groups, the ‘creatives’ at the ‘top of the sociocultural hierarchy’ vs. the workers, the ‘little people’, subordinates, those excluded by liberalism, and are ‘incompatible’” (Lazzarato 2007, 1). Then, he contends, quoting an interview by Boltanski and Chiapello (2000), that the authors are neglecting the role of artistic critique versus social critique, by considering that “the artistic critique is ‘not in itself necessary to effectively challenge capitalism, a fact demonstrated by the earlier successes of the workers’ movement without the support of the artistic critique’” (Lazzarato 2007, 1). Furthermore, he criticizes the authors’ point of view according to which “artistic critique is not naturally egalitarian, always running the risk of being reinterpreted in an aristocratic sense,” and “untempered by considerations of equality and solidarity of the social critique, [it] can very quickly play into the hands of a particularly destructive form of liberalism, as we have seen in recent years (Boltanski and Chiapello 2000)” (Lazzarato 2007, 2).

It is true that some of Boltanski and Chiapello’s conclusions “are found among others on studying the culture of business frameworks rather than the movements themselves, or rather studying the hegemonic culture from inside, instead of the resistance that opposes it,” as Paula Rebughini observes in an informed study, “Critique and Social Movements: Looking Beyond Contingency and Normativity” (2010, 471). However, as Rebughini confirms, the analysis of capitalism from the 1990s realized by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) offers a previously unseen vision of the social movements, although not a study of them specifically. This would first consist in pointing out the existence of a *paradox* in the relationships between social movements (from May 1968 to the “new social movements” of the 1970s) and the artistic or social critique: “The critical spirit driven by the mobilization mainly favoured *artistic critique*, centred around the question of authenticity, expressions of creativity and recognition, rather than *social critique* and

its question of a just redistribution.” Second, in revealing a possible perverse effect of the success of the “new social movements”: “This allowed the individualizing and liberal culture of capitalism to absorb and domesticate creative and authentic critique, using it to weaken social critique and to justify the re-dimensioning of welfare or flexible working practices” (Rebughini 2010, 471).

In this context, it is worth clearing up a misunderstanding, having both theoretical and practical implications. As Boltanski and Chiapello make clear in the Preface and Postscript of the English edition (2005a, xv–xvi), their aim “was never to help establish the ‘projective city’ or even [...] to seek to offer ‘capitalism’ a new, immediately available ‘city,’” but to offer a descriptive analysis that prepares “a revival of critique.” Actually, they aimed at a reconsideration of the critique on capitalism by taking into account the specificity of its recent developments and the paradoxical effects of its demands incorporated into the new spirit of capitalism. It is true that the social form of critique is clearly assumed by them, as they closely examine the mechanisms that aim to introduce new forms of *security* and *justice* into a universe where flexibility, mobility, and a network form of organization had become basic reference points (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xv). Meanwhile, the direction that the renewal of the artistic critic might take remains blurred (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xvii).

Revival and Redeployment of the Artistic Critique: Against New Forms of Commodification

This new situation makes it necessary, according to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a), to renew and redeploy the critique on capitalism, not only in its content, but also in its forms and aims. Yet, this task should be accomplished without setting up the protest and the revolt into values in themselves, regardless of their relevance and acuity. It should also proceed from a different sociological standpoint: the two French sociologists aim to do this from their position as “critics” and not simply “analysts of critique.” In other words, from the standpoint not only of a “critical sociology,” which by its scientific aim could be indifferent to the values that

actors claim to adhere to, but mainly of a “sociology of the critique,” which sought to render its foundations more solid (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, x–xii, xiv).

As the authors convincingly argued, on the one hand, artistic critique has to restart from different bases of critique: this critique “must constantly shift and forge new weapons,” and “must continually resume its analysis in order to stay as close as possible to the properties that characterize the capitalism of its time” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 39–41). Their analysis of “the test of the artistic critique” opened up the inescapable question of whether recent forms of capitalism have not emptied the demands of liberation and authenticity of what gave them substance, and anchored them in people’s everyday experience (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 419–20.)

On the other hand, Boltanski and Chiapello emphasize the importance of a more effective critique, of finding new ways to formulate indignation, denunciation, and claims on the basis of new forms of oppression and commodification of productive labor, as well as of the construction of new mechanisms of justice, adjusted with the specificity of recent evolutions, the development of a new “connexionist logic” and a “network capitalism,” having new modes of functioning, flexible, in network, in which relations and contacts are the new currency to form a world organized around short-lived projects (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 466–68, 519–20). Therefore, artistic critique, in order to be better equipped to foil the recuperative traps that have hitherto been set for it, should take into account the interdependence of the different dimensions of the demands of liberation and authenticity, as well as capitalism’s vocation to merchandise desire, especially the desire for liberation, and hence to recuperate and supervise it (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 438).

Unsurprisingly, the authors’ updated personal viewpoint on this issue, expressed in the Postscript “Sociology *Contra* Fatalism,” in some way corrects the descriptive analysis in the body of the text (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xv). According to this “personal” standpoint, the themes of the artistic critique, such as the demands for *liberation*, *autonomy*, and *authenticity*, are essential and still topical, because it is

on the basis of such themes that “we have most chance of mounting effective resistance to the establishment of a world where anything can find itself transformed into a commodity product,” and “where people would constantly be put to the test, subjected to an exigency of incessant change and deprived by this kind of organized insecurity of what ensures the permanency of their self.” Boltanski and Chiapello conclude their analysis of the new spirit of capitalism by stating that a *revived artistic critique* can accomplish this task only by undoing the link that has hitherto associated liberation with mobility, which has led to insecurity and precariousness (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 535–36). The target of this warning is the culture of uncertainty and creativity that was promoted by that trend of artistic critique which has at its core the opposition between *stability* and *mobility*. This opposition emerges in Baudelaire’s work and particularly expands through Surrealism and, more recently, through movements that stem from it, such as Situationism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 38; Boltanski 2008, 56; Ratiu 2011, 38–40).

This conclusion also implies a position against the radicalism and vast prophetic demands or totalizing designs of the so-called revolutionary critique: the “longing for total revolution.” In a further analysis of the fate of the left criticism in current capitalism, entitled “The Present Left and the Longing for Revolution” (2008), Boltanski notes its conflictive or paradoxical state: while the social critique that reappeared in France following 1995 is still anticapitalist but mainly concerned with democracy, rights, and citizenship, and seems to have abandoned the aspiration to total revolution, this longing becomes displaced from the domain of the production of material goods to that of the reproduction of human beings, which invests in questions connected to “biopolitics” (in terms of Foucault). This is a much more radical critique because it involves a radical redefinition of anthropology: the separation between primary humanity, “biological,” and a second (future) humanity, “elective.” Yet, this new form of longing for total revolution is indifferent to the question of capitalism or is conjugated with it; that is, it is no longer anticapitalist (Boltanski 2008, 64–65, 69–70; see also, Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xiv).

Further Controversies: The Concept of “Critique” in Sociology

These controversies and paradoxes also relate to different views on the concept of “critique” and types of critical approaches in sociology. “There is no shared vision regarding the content and the way in which critique may be conducted,” as Rebughini (2010) observes, and it is difficult to give an unequivocal answer to the questions “critique of what?” and “critique for whom?” The concept of critique in sociology “has usually referred to the ‘critique of domination’ or to the break of a cognitive and normative order structured within practices and routines.” Yet, Rebughini (2010) reports, on the one hand, the emergence in recent years of a re-dimensioned conception of critique, of a pragmatic, pluralistic, and contingent nature. On the other hand, she shows how the need for a strong and transcendental concept of critique that does not renounce the possibility of individual and collective emancipation is still present (Rebughini 2010, 459).

For a better clarification of this tension, I will briefly compare four major readings of the concept of critique, drawing on Rebughini (2010): *transcendent* (critical theory), *epistemic* (critical sociology: Bourdieu), *contingent* (Foucault), and *pragmatic* (Boltanski and Thévenot). The “transcendent critique,” born from the Kantian critique and passing through Hegel and Marx, developed by the Frankfurt School and successively revised by Habermas, presents a certain continuity in the concept of critique as “transcendent to the context” (Rebughini 2010, 461). Bourdieu’s critical sociology can be defined as an “epistemic critique” of domination, where sociological knowledge plays a central role as a point of view able to maintain its distance from the *doxa*, demonstrating how power is instilled in bodies and cognitive processes (as he posits in *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, 1998). However, the possibility of emancipation is problematical: Bourdieu refuses to recognize any ontological or existential valence for a resistant subject, favoring the genealogical study of the relationships between social positions, including dispositions and practices, over research into hidden determinants of phenomenal reality (Rebughini 2010, 465). The approaches by the “contingent critique” and “pragmatic critique” appear, instead, as a sociology of critical capacity: an

immanent critique based on the present and on everyday life practices. Unlike critical theory, these approaches “consider critique as a capacity and opportunity born in the world of daily life, from exemplary actions, from ‘moments of crisis’, or from apparently banal actions that in truth insert a fundamental moment of break into routine” (Rebughini 2010, 461–62).

These latter approaches are nonetheless distinct. Foucault’s “contingent critique” claims that to be free, the individual must show pure spontaneity and improvisation separated from social and historical conditions: as Rebughini (2010, 467) suggests, “his position is an ‘ontology of the present’ that is opposed to the ‘analysis of truth’ of Habermas: one bases critique upon the search for autonomy, the other on the search for justice.” Boltanski and Chiapello’s *The New Spirit of Capitalism* could be included in the area of “pragmatic critique,” a type of interpretation developed principally by Boltanski and Thévenot in *On Justification* (1991/2006). In spite of its multiple sources, the entire project of French pragmatic sociology as a whole is the level on which Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005a) can be understood, as contended in the editors’ introduction to *New Spirits of Capitalism?: Crisis, Justifications, and Dynamics* (Du Gay and Morgan 2013b, chap. 1; see also, Taupin 2013, 509). Hence, the concept of critique (on capitalism) in that book must be connected to the wider project of French pragmatic sociology, first, to its precedents, then to further developments—including the exploration of possibility for sociology itself to provide a critical stance.

The “social theory of critical practice” proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot in *On Justification* (1991/2006) tries to understand how what the authors call “critical capacity” is formed, starting from the resources, capacities, and competences that people possess. People, involved in ordinary everyday actions, can find themselves faced by a “test of strength,” and experience a sense of injustice that pushes them into mobilization. The reflexivity of critique is made possible by some conditions and context, called *moments critiques*, in which a moment of crisis of common sense and routine is produced, which then produces the need to elaborate a justification of the final critical action (Rebughini 2010, 470). Therefore, instead of looking for a universal, unitary, or metaphysical content of critique, as the critique on capitalism once did, Boltanski and Thévenot

(1991/2006) observe a plurality of registers of critique that refers to different contexts and normatives, or even to different frameworks of justice, which each help critique to emerge because they allow people to make comparisons and valuations (Rebughini 2010, 471).

Revival of the Social Critique: The Sociology of Emancipation (Boltanski) as a New Form of Social Critique

The New Spirit of Capitalism was also an attempt by Boltanski and Chiapello to reintroduce a sociological critique into the agenda of the sociology of critical practices. This attempt did not, as such, respect its own founding principles, contradicting the initial theoretical formulation of the “pragmatic sociology of critique” presented in *On Justification*, for example, by describing the logic of displacement as diametrically opposed to the logic of categorization and considering it as a break with that framework, and defining central theoretical concepts such as the test of strength without referring to principles of *justice*⁴ (Taupin 2013, 509). The new attempt by Boltanski to revive a critical form of sociology resulted in another book, *De la critique. Précis de sociologie de l’émancipation* (2009), translated into English in 2011. The chapter by Boltanski in *New Spirits of Capitalism? Crises, Justifications, and Dynamics* (2013), entitled “A Journey Through French-Style Critique,” offers a summary of the perspective provided by *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation* (2011), outlining the program of a sociology of critical practice which seeks to incorporate a renewed social critique.

The effort to renew the contribution of sociology to social critique first consists (in chaps. 1 and 2 of *On Critique*) of reconsidering the relationship between the “pragmatic sociology of critique” and Bourdieu’s “critical sociology,” on the one hand, by reducing the tension between them, and, on the other hand, by distinguishing them through the emphasis, against the analysis of “agents” within the theory of domination, on the role of “actors” as always active, openly critical, and condemning injustices (Boltanski 2011, x–xi, 18–19, 43–44). From the standpoint of the sociology of critical practice, “the social world is no longer seen as a place

of passively accepted domination, or even of domination suffered unconsciously, but instead as a site full of disputes, critiques, disagreements, and attempts to restore local, always contestable, harmony” (Boltanski 2013). Second, it consists (in chaps. 3 “The Power of Institutions” and 4 “The Necessity of Critique”) in formulating afresh the question of critique in everyday reality, by relying directly upon the criticism formulated by the *actors* themselves in particular situations. Boltanski (2013) further argues that this way of renewal “has, however, had only modest success because it does not permit mounting a wider critique that encompasses social reality regarded in its *totality*, with different components systematically linked to one another, a critique that would consequently advocate for a drastic change of the political order.” He also argues that “this reflects not a failing of the theory but a realistic understanding by actors of the nature of the situation in which they find themselves.” According to Boltanski, the possibility of critique is derived from a contradiction, lodged at the heart of institutions, which can be described as “hermeneutic contradiction”: “[I]t is institutions that have the task of maintaining in working order the current formats and rules and, hence, the task of *confirmation* of the *reality of the reality*; however, institutions are always precarious in the sense that they claim to be timeless, disembodied and eternal but their rules etc. can only ever be articulated by embodied actors” (Boltanski 2013). Therefore, critique is considered in its dialogical relationship with the institutions it is arrayed against:

It can be expressed either by showing that the tests as conducted do not conform to their format; or by drawing from the world examples and cases that do not accord with reality as it is established, making it possible to challenge the reality of reality and, thereby, change its contours. (Boltanski 2011, xi, 74–75, 78–80)

It is precisely this “hermeneutical contradiction” that opens a breach within which critique can develop and the issue of *emancipation* can arise (Boltanski 2013). A third step in renewing the contribution of sociology to social critique consists in sketching (in chaps. 5 and 6) some of the paths critique might take today in order to proceed in the direction of “emancipation in the pragmatic sense” (Boltanski 2011, 84–88, 97–99).

In chap. 5, describing different “political regimes of domination,” Boltanski brings to light a new formatting of domination, about which, drawing on his earlier work, he shows that it has been developed in the forge of management: a complex “managerial mode/effect of domination,” “apparently less central, more reticulate, looking much friendlier but in its proposals certainly much more demanding for workers; the new rule presupposes the intensification of links between its main actors and increasingly complex forms of coordination” (Boltanski 2011, 127–29, 136–38; see also, Fabiani 2011, 406). Confronted with a regime of this type, critique, when not simply disarmed, finds itself profoundly altered, and the way in which it exploits hermeneutic contradiction will take a new direction: “the eternal road of revolt” (Boltanski 2011, 158). This would be also a new direction for sociology itself: by engaging the issue of resource inequalities in social space and the availability of effective forms of domination, sociology finds again an active function, *the research of emancipation* (Fabiani 2011, 406).

A question arises whether this new radical form of social critique, whose dialectical frame includes the triple sequence “critique”—“critique of the critique”—“sociology of emancipation”, is also an improved one, in the sense of offering us an effective set of theoretical tools able to produce innovative political action. According to some commentators, such as Fabiani, the answer is no, because this radical form is inhabited by an ambiguity, the instrumentalization of theory by revolutionary practice: “The concept of *revolt* is explicitly associated with the notion of communism [Boltanski 2011, 159], undoubtedly stained by the failures of existing socialism, but which could become a new idea. One would certainly not insult Boltanski if one said that the final political recommendation stands well below the author’s theoretical efforts and the conceptual rewards they provide” (Fabiani 2011, 405).

Ève Chiapello’s chapter in *New Spirits of Capitalism? Crises, Justifications, and Dynamics* (2013), entitled “Capitalism and Its Criticisms,” which provides a detailed review of the history and propositions of the different criticisms of capitalism, ends instead by identifying the “third ways” currently under discussion to reform capitalism. She develops the idea that a “new cycle of recuperation” is underway within capitalism, suggesting that new forms of criticism, ecological and conservative criticism, have

now become a central element in the recuperation and restructuring of capitalism. Ecological criticism supports production and consumption on a local scale, while conservative criticism advocates solidarity-based capitalism with a human face. The framework offered by Chiapello provides an interpretation of corporate social responsibility as an answer to these new forms of criticism of the capitalist model (Chiapello 2013; see, also, Taupin 2013, 506).

Critique, Creativity, and Creative Lifestyles

Following the previous analysis, the question rises of how artistic critique could be exercised in its practical sense in order to avoid the alternative of being either ignored, and thus perceived as useless, or recuperated? Which are the conditions of possibility for contemporary art to exercise a genuine critique of capitalist order?

One possible answer could emerge by employing the concept of *critique* in the tradition of practical critique, whose origin can be found, according to Michel Foucault, in Immanuel Kant's work. Yet, not in the first *Critique*, which posed the question of the conditions of possibility of true knowledge, but in his texts on *Aufklärung* or on the Revolution. This different understanding of critique involves what Foucault calls "an ontology of present reality, an ontology of modernity, an ontology of ourselves," that is, a critique challenging the present on the basis of the diagnosis of "what we are," and which he has also defined as a "critical attitude" (Foucault 2010, 20–21, 378–79; 2007, 42).

The practical dimension of the critique is manifest in that Foucault, in the famous conference "What Is Critique?" given in 1978 at the Société Française de Philosophie, qualifies the critical attitude as both *political* and *moral*, and defines it as "a certain way of thinking, speaking and acting," exercised in multiple relationships "to what exists, to what one knows," "to society, to culture," and also "to others" (Foucault 2007, 42, 44). As the origin of critical attitude, specific to modern civilization, is located in the opposition to the growing movement of governmentalization of both society and individuals, critique is first defined as "the art of not being governed quite so much," at least "not like that and at that

cost” (Foucault 2007, 44, 45). Critique is opposed to the governing of the subject; therefore, it develops in a reactive way. In this sense, critique “only exists in relation to something other than itself,” and should not be a form of judgment but a way of existing and describing reality in an alternative way (Foucault 2007, 42; see also, Rebughini 2010, 468).

Second, critique is approached by Foucault in relation to power and truth. In the context of “politics of truth,” critique is defined as “the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effect on power and question power on its discourses of truth,” which equates with “the art of voluntary insubordination” and “the desubjugation of the subject,” in the sense that critique relies on the existing normative and institutional system while seeking to expose the limits of that system in order to explore ways to transform it (Foucault 2007, 47; see, also, Lemke 2011, 33). Although this dimension of critique is akin to the historical practice of revolt, this does not refer to a fundamental anarchism or an originary freedom (Foucault 2007, 75). In “The Subject and Power” (1983), Foucault also affirms that critique can only be exercised through “techniques of the self” that resist the self-reproduction of power through discourses and their truth values (Foucault 1983, 212–14). Critique characterizes the ethical autonomy of every individual and, thus, concerns self-analysis that involves the entire existence (Rebughini 2010, 467–68).

The question of whether critical attitude might be both an individual and a collective experience is left open by Foucault in “What Is Critique?” (2007, 76). However, Rebughini (2010, 468) claims that for Foucault, “critique tends to express itself as an exit strategy, evasion (*dérive*) and eccentric behaviour”: “Autonomy therefore corresponds to a contingency and not to a historical process, because one can only temporarily free oneself from domination in the present.” Along with the disbelief in the utopian possibility of collective redemption, another limit of Foucault’s proposals would be that critique remains purely individual and contingent: “The practice of freedom only remains subjective and intelligible to the subject that practises it, without any real possibility of a passage towards collective action with the necessary power to attempt to modify the structural conditions in which it finds itself” (Rebughini 2010, 468).

Against this reading of Foucault’s idea of critique in individualist and solipsist terms, Thomas Lemke (2011) emphasizes the relational and collective dimension of critique, as well as its local and experimental character,

indicated by the notion of “experience.” According to him, Foucault’s notion of critique as an ethical–political attitude is linked to a specific reading of the “experience”: this is conceived as “a dominant structure and transformative force, as existing background of practices and transcending event, as the object of theoretical inquiry and the objective moving beyond historical limits” (Lemke 2011, 26, 30). The definition of experience, by Foucault, as a dynamic interplay between games of truth, forms of power, and relations to the self, is confirmed by his article “What Is Enlightenment?” (1984), where the term experience “points to the local and ‘experimental’ character of critique,” and also “refers to a ‘critical ontology of ourselves’ that seeks to make new historical experiences possible by moving beyond the limits of the present” (Foucault 1984, 46–47; see also, Lemke 32). In this sense, critique, as a core “attitude of modernity”, is also a mode of relationship of oneself to oneself and to the present (Foucault 1984, 39–41). Thus, Foucault’s idea of critique cannot be reduced to a passive, theoretical concern, and it is not limited to taking a position on an already existing “chess-board”: critique means altering the “rules of the game” while playing the game (Lemke 2011, 35). Within the Foucauldian “ontology of ourselves,” to criticize means to expose one’s own ontological status, that is, to engage in a process of self-questioning, to make visible the limits of “what we are” in order to transgress them, which involves the danger of falling outside the established norms of recognition. Critical activity performs as a way of ethical self-formation, which is also a “desubjectivation” of subject: although this self-formation operates in a specific normative horizon, it extends and transforms the existing norms. Within the framework of such “transformative,” “experimental” critique, as Lemke dubs it, autonomy and self-formation contribute to the constitution of new subjectivities and alternative norms (Lemke 2011, 36, 38–39).

To further explore this issue, one could look not only at the body politic but also at a different zone, the artistic work, and for a different target, which in the tradition of German philosophy is called the “affective labor” and “subject formation,” as nonmarketized aspects of human existence, distinct from the commodified “productive labor” (for this distinction, see Fraser 2013; Majewska 2014, 11). The artist and artistic work are the body and process where *production*, *self-expression*, and *way of life* meet. It is true that “art’s undeniable advantage is that artists also keep producing works that exist separately from what they do and what they

live,” and thus “can be disconnected from them” (Graw 2008a, 12). But it is from the vantage point of the “production of subjectivity” that the interactions between artistic creativity and normative change become a major issue. Hence, there is a need to explore the role of the artists in relation to the “imperative to creativity,” which currently leads to a figure of the artist, not exempt from controversy (yet less problematic than the Nietzschean model), other than the artist as the exemplary “worker of the future”: the artist as a model of *existence* or *way of life*.⁵

The actual significance of this model is less related to the figure of *artiste engagé* and more to that figure originating in Baudelaire’s *dandy*, who made of his body, his behavior, his feelings and passions, thus his very existence, a “work of art.” As Foucault maintains in “What Is Enlightenment?” (1984) when reflecting on Baudelaire’s idea of “modernity,” this “is not simply a form of relationship to the present; it is also a mode of relationship that has to be established with oneself.” Modernity does not “liberate man in his own being”; it compels him to face the task of producing himself as a kind of transgression of the historical limits and situation. Moreover, this complex and difficult “elaboration of the self” did not take place in society itself, or in the body politic, but can only be produced in another, different place, which Baudelaire calls *art* (Foucault 1984, 41–42).

Thus, another question arises: could this critical attitude or art (“of not being governed quite so much” or “of voluntary insubordination,” according to Foucault) be molded by the model of the artist free of all attachments, the *dandy* (Baudelaire 1964), which, as noted by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, 38), made not only the absence of production, unless it was “production of the self,” but also the culture of uncertainty into untranscendable ideals?

The positive idea of work as a condition or vector of individual self-fulfillment and having high expressive potential, as against its negative characterization as a simple means, a cost, an expense or sacrifice, has its importance for redefining the normative and social roles of artists through their creativity. Pierre-Michel Menger (2005) observes that it is related to the expressive model of *praxis* which dates back to Aristotle and was later re-elaborated upon by Herder and influenced by the romanticist philosophies of the nineteenth century (Hegel, Schelling) and by Marx, until a double contemporary posterity: the constructivist sociology of Husserlian

inspiration (Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann) on the one side, and the critical philosophy of Marxist inspiration, from the School of Frankfurt to Hannah Arendt, on the other side. Work as achievement, self-expression, *praxis*, means the way for humanity to realize its essence, not in passive leisure, but in the movement of an action that produces something durable and not readily programmable (Menger 2005, 91; Ratiu 2011, 44–45).

A step further was made by Daniel Bell in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976), which followed his other seminal book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973), where he formulated the idea that the expression and remaking of the “self” in order to achieve self-realization and self-fulfillment is the axial principle of modern culture. In addition, he observed that since the beginning of the twentieth century, it was culture that has taken the initiative in promoting change; consequently, its hedonistic–narcissistic principles, the idea of *pleasure* as a way of life and of self-expression, were transposed in the sphere of an economy that has been geared to meet these new wants. Thus, culture and the arts have had a dissolving power over capitalism, because, in this way, the capitalist system has lost its transcendental (Protestant) ethic, which affects the principle of the efficiency of the economic sphere (Bell 1976, xxiv–xxv, 13, 21–22). Hence, he follows a line of thinking that persists in seeing work and life, or the economy and the culture, as separate spheres with distinct principles or value systems, and that criticizes the bohemian(ism) because of its principles and consequences.

On the contrary, Richard Florida (who is quoting Bell’s critique), in *The Rise of the Creative Class*, admits the possibility of synthesis between the hedonist ethic and the Protestant ethic, between bohemian and bourgeois, or of actually moving beyond these old categories that no longer apply at all. According to him, “creativity is not the province of a few selected geniuses who can get away with breaking the mould because they possess superhuman talents. It is a capacity inherent to varying degrees in virtually all people” (Florida 2002, 32). Thus, creativity appears as an ontological capacity at least for a new class, the “creative class,” even though it is not completely democratized or socially generalized. For Florida, the nowadays’ “creative people,” with creative values, working in creative workplaces, and living essentially creative lifestyles, certainly are

not Baudelaire; still, “they represent a new mainstream setting the norms and pace for much of society” (Florida 2002, 196–97, 211). Yet, these creative lifestyles, because of their characteristics such as flexibility and hyper-mobility, are *unsustainable* (Kirchberg 2008). As already mentioned, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) have called attention to the costs, in terms of material and psychological security, associated with these lifestyles adjusted to the recent development of “network capitalism,” driven by “connexionist logic” and organized around short-lived projects: increased anxiety, instability, insecurity, and precariousness (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 16–18, 466–68; see also, Ratiu 2011, 43–44).

For Florida, the “creative ethos” is “the fundamental spirit or character of [today] culture,” which offers an (alternative) ontology of present reality and of ourselves: “the creative ethos pervades everything from our workplace culture to our values and communities, reshaping the way we see ourselves as economic and social actors – our very identities” (Florida 2002, 21–22). The creative ethos is also defined as the overall commitment to creativity in its varied dimensions. In Florida’s view, the rise of the “creative economy” in the “Creative Age” is not only drawing the spheres of innovation, business/entrepreneurship, and culture into one another, in intimate combinations, but is also blending the varied forms of creativity, technological, economic, artistic, and cultural, which according to him are deeply interrelated: “Not only do they share a common thought process, they reinforce each other through cross-fertilization and mutual stimulation” (Florida 2002, 33, 201). This playful form of creative ethos or attitude that celebrates contingencies for the making and unmaking of the social fabric, at a distance from Foucault’s concept of “critical attitude” or ethos, can also be found in contemporary management discourse that demands innovation, flexibility, mobility, and an ability to adapt to rapidly changing situations (Lemke 2011, 39).

Without neglecting the similarities between the creative talents or activities, scientific, entrepreneurial, and artistic, I would add that there still are some specific differences that should be considered. First, while *scientific* creativity is commonly an ability to accelerate an accumulation of knowledge within a given conceptual order or paradigm, as “normal science” in T.S. Kuhn’s (1962) theory, which certainly does not exclude

rare moments of “revolutions,” *artistic* creativity is typically a “rules-breaking process” against a given practice or order (Cliche et al. 2002, 28–29). This view of the specificity of artistic creativity, which intrinsically involves *critique*, is essential when thinking about the role of the artists and the manner in which they can play in social change (Ratiu 2011, 46–47), as well as in normative change.

Roles of Artistic Creativity and Critique in the Normative Change⁶

According to this viewpoint, artistic creativity plays, by its very nature, as a rules-breaking process, disrupting existing patterns of thought and life, questioning and challenging existing practices and norms, including the “rules of the game” of the current society. Thus, artists can contribute to opening up new possibilities either for the quality of affective or emotional life, for sustainable lifestyle, or for other (noncommodified) worlds of production.

One could ask whether this creative contribution would not be just another form of participation in the endless capitalist process and its new imperative to unlimited accumulation of “creative capital.” It is worth mentioning that the idea of artistic creativity—and–critique is distinct from the so-called creative destruction, Joseph Schumpeter’s (1942/2003) argument about the disruption inherent in economic progress. This illustrates the incessant technological–entrepreneurial innovation and the evolutionary character of the capitalist process (Schumpeter 2003, 81–86). One might argue that such a process of innovation is a double-edged sword with unsustainable effects, instability, insecurity, and crisis, as David Harvey has contended in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (1989/2005, 105–106).

It is true that some authors look at the individual creative artists as dispensable tools of urban economic growth and regeneration, such as Florida (2002, 2005) did. Another assumption of Florida’s theory of creativity is that the values, beliefs, and attitudes that are closely associated with the global talent attraction are shared by all creative cities and communities. Supposedly, these “creative communities” are defined by

impermanent relationships, loose ties, quasi-anonymous lives, and shared values such as individuality, meritocracy, diversity, and openness (Florida 2002, 15, 77–80). He considers this “creative capital” to be a highly mobile factor, like technology; both are “not fixed stocks, but transient *flows*,” “flowing into and out of places” (2005, 7). This flow or mobility could be a forced one: the increasing wealth for a city and property development also entail increasing gentrification, which triggers an *outmigration* of artists or bohemians (Florida 2005, 24–25). Thus, the creative class/capital theory implicitly endorses the gentrification of urban centers and its social consequences (O’Connor and Kong 2009, 3), posits an instrumental view on artists, and overlooks the human and symbolic dimensions of places or creative cities or creative societies.

What then could be a true sustainable role of artists and the arts in normative and social change? The cultural strategies of development have identified some roles that artists played in fostering cultural consumption (in the 1970s and 1980s), as well as within and around cultural production and the symbolic economy (in the 1990s): “Visual artists play a key productive role in creating and processing images for the urban economy” (Zukin 2001, 260). More recently, the urban culturalist perspective (Borer 2006), the cognitive–cultural perspective (Scott 2006, 2007), and the new paradigm of sustainable development (Kagan and Kirchberg 2008; Kagan and Verstraete 2011) hold instead the notion that individual and collective expressions of creativity, including the artistic ones, could be channeled to address not only urban renewal but also environmentally sustainable economic regeneration, social justice, and community building. Thus, the arts and artistic creativity could play a significant role in both material and immaterial processes: constructing social identity and contributing to social belonging; creating city image and urban identity; creating culturally meaningful places—place-based myths, narratives, and collective memories; contributing to participative processes from the ground; thus, fostering a wider and sustainable sense of place and of community, improving the quality of emotional life, and promoting changes toward sustainable lifestyles (see Ratiu 2013, 133).

Another question then could emerge as to whether this proposition would be just another “sustainable” form of instrumentalization of arts

and culture. The issue of cultural instrumentality, that is, regarding the arts as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, has been extensively addressed by many authors. A detailed discussion of this topic is beyond this chapter's scope. Here, I only draw attention to connections between "instrumental cultural policies" and managerial discourses, which were disclosed by Eleonora Belfiore (2004) and Andrew Brighton (2006, 2007).

As Belfiore has observed, the emphasis placed on the role of the cultural sector in place marketing and local economic development is an example of the increasing tendency to justify public spending on the arts on the basis of instrumental notions of the arts and culture. This instrumental emphasis in cultural policy is closely linked to the changes in the style of public administration that have given rise to the *New Public Management* as well as to certain developments in postmodern cultural theory: notably, the concept of cultural relativism that "undermined – at the theoretical level – the possibility to justify any longer cultural policy decisions grounded on uncontroversial principles of 'excellence', 'quality' and 'artistic value'" (Belfiore 2004, 183–85, 189). Against the damaging effects that such developments may ultimately have on the arts themselves, Belfiore concludes that "an altogether healthier exercise for the arts sector would probably have been the attempt to elaborate a definition of what makes the arts *intrinsically* valuable to society" (Belfiore 2004, 200).

Brighton (2006) has also argued against the politicization of the arts, yet without denying their political importance, as they can offer experience, values, and ideas other than those possible in political discourse. A further article by Brighton, entitled "Should Art Change the World?" (2007), detects in the reading of the question "should art improve society?" a symptom of the managerial discourse and its utilitarian rationality that fails to acknowledge the "multiple ecologies of reason" and "different ideas of the good life." A certain role is nonetheless recognized in art: this is praised as an "antibody" to utilitarian rationality "because it changes the world in ways other than those prescribed by the managerial state" (Brighton 2007).

These accounts are valuable in rethinking any attempt to value art solely on its instrumental values and so-called measurable criteria or rituals of verification. Indeed, the notion of development based on cultural

sustainability would be improved by considering art not as another instrument (such as technology) and envisaging its role without subjecting it to a calculation in terms of outcomes, efficiency, and control. Instead, one can make a stand for its intrinsic value and autonomy from any political constraint.

Conclusion

To conclude, two remarks might be made on how artists have and still can play a role in the normative change through artistic critique and creativity. The first remark drawn from the analysis of the dynamics of capitalism in relation to critique and its “new spirit” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a) is that capitalism and critique are not in opposition to each other but require each other: this dialectic proves interminable within the capitalist regime. Artistic critique had a paradoxical effect: victim of its own success, it was recuperated and integrated into managerial rhetoric and the new set of norms or legitimizing value system of capitalism. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) have shown that the increasing generalization of the new exigencies of the artistic–intellectual professions, singularity, flexibility, adaptability, creativity, inventiveness, and self-expression, as new norms of excellence is strongly related to “the new spirit of capitalism,” isomorphic with a globalized, “connexionist” or “network capitalism,” implementing new technologies and modes of organization. The wide distribution of this model or “imperative for creativity,” also through the managerial discourse, does not only shift our understanding of the arts, but also significantly changes ideological, technological, and organizational structures of the worlds of production, as well as certain ways of life as “creative lifestyles” (Florida 2002), autonomous, adaptable, flexible, mobile. Yet, this model of artistic creativity or “creative lifestyle” could not be generalized to the entire social body or other worlds of production without costs in terms of instability, insecurity, and precariousness. The aim of the analysis by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) was not celebratory but preparatory for a revival of the critique on capitalism, and its redeployment with new contents, forms, and aims: an artistic critique of new forms of commodification, and mainly a social critique

through a new form of the pragmatic sociology of critique as “sociology of emancipation” (Boltanski 2011). However, further developments have suggested the radical solution of the “eternal road of revolt” (Boltanski 2011, 2013) or reported the entrapment of new forms of critique into a “new cycle of recuperation” within capitalism (Chiapello 2013).

The question is still open if we could consider artistic critique without offering it to instrumental recuperation and subjecting art to calculation in terms of efficiency and control or, on the contrary, blending it into a social critique that borders on radical utopianism. The second remark is that the possibility for artists to exercise a genuine critique of capitalist order is not jammed. This could emerge by a different understanding of critique, practical, involving what Foucault (1978/2007) calls an “ontology of present reality,” an “ontology of ourselves,” and a “critical attitude,” defined as “the art of not being governed quite so much,” as well as “the art of voluntary insubordination” and “the desubjugation of the subject.” This critical way of thinking, speaking, and acting does not refer to a fundamental anarchism or an originary freedom; nevertheless, it is not reduced to a theoretical concern and is not limited to taking a position on an already existing “chess-board”—it means altering the “rules of the game” (Lemke 2011). Thus, in the zone of artistic work, critique could look for different ends, the “affective labor” and “subject formation,” as nonmarketized aspects of human existence (Fraser 2013). Within the framework of such “transformative critique,” autonomy and self-formation could contribute to the constitution of new subjectivities and alternative norms, which could escape instrumental recuperation.

Therefore, the critical function of the art is related to the cardinal values of the artistic competence, imagination, play, originality, even behavioral atypicality and creative anarchy, which society itself needs. Yet, artistic creativity does not play as a cumulative development, but, by its very nature, as a “rules-breaking process,” by questioning and challenging existing practices and norms, including the “rules of the game” of the current society, and by disrupting existing patterns of thought and life: artists can freely and autonomously play a key role in opening up new possibilities either for the quality of affective or of emotional life, by redeveloping a particular sense of self-realization and self-fulfillment, for a sustainable lifestyle, or for other worlds of production.

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Notes

1. Ideology is understood as a justificatory collective value system, not as a set of false ideas or deception. To detach themselves from the conception of ideology as a deceptive mask serving to veil reality, Boltanski and Chiapello, in the Preface to the English edition of their book (2005a, xx–xxii, xxvii), make it clear that there are three distinct components in what they term the “spirit of capitalism”: the social “justice” that specifies how capitalist mechanisms are geared toward the common good is one of them, along with two other components that involve propositions in terms of “security” and “stimulation.” Hence, if “ideologies” are to be successful, they must be rooted in organizational, institutional, and legal mechanisms which give them a “real” existence.
2. In the Preface of the English edition, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, xxvi–xxvii) envisage a rebalancing of this model, which implied that critique inevitably always ensues capitalistic displacements, and a revision of the issue of the “lateness of critique” in favor of the simultaneity and equal distribution of relative capacities for displacement and categorization to all actors.
3. In an “Introduction” and “Response” to Boltanski in *Under Pressure: Pictures, Subjects and the New Spirit of Capitalism* (2008), Isabelle Graw mentions the example of the conceptual art and its emphasis on projects, communication, networking, self-management, and the staging of one’s personality. Furthermore, the “project culture” which has emerged in some segments of the art world in the early 1990s sees its limits and guidelines set by the “project-oriented city” described by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a). Most activities in this world present themselves as short-term projects, the distinction between “work” and “nonwork” becoming obsolete, as in the post-Fordist condition: “Life turns into a succession of projects of limited duration, and subjects are expected to quickly and flexibly adapt themselves to constantly changing conditions and unexpected developments” (Graw 2008a, 11–12; 2008b, 76–77).

4. The latter contradiction is revised in the English edition, with reference to justice as a distinct component of the spirit of capitalism; see the Preface, Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, xv, and Note 1 in this chapter.
5. This issue has been previously addressed in a section, pp. 43–46, of my article “Artistic Critique and Creativity: how do Artists Play in the Social Change?” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Philosophia* (2011), 56:3, pp. 27–49.
6. This section is a revised version of the section “Roles of Artists and the Arts in Achieving Urban Creativity and Sustainable Development,” originally published in Ratiu, Dan Eugen 2013: “Creative Cities and/or Sustainable Cities: Discourses and Practices.” *City, Culture and Society* (Special Issue “The Sustainable City and the Arts”) 4:3, pp. 125–35.

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8

De-aestheticization and the Dialectics of the Aesthetic and Anti-aesthetic in Contemporary Art

Gerard Vilar

Introduction

From the time artistic practices began to gain their autonomy in the eighteenth century in Western Europe, the relationship between art and society was largely unstable, problematic, and variable. In any subject area, be it politics, economy, morality, or science, correlations can be seen in one direction and in the contrary. Art has been for the emancipation of the working class as well as for aesthetic *art pour l'art*, it has been scientific and also irrational, it has been representative but also abstract, it has been beauty and also ugliness; simply put, it has been either merchandise or the contrary. During the age of Romanticism, it was widely believed that art was something extremely spiritual, something that had little to do with the prose of real day-to-day life, and even less to do with money and business. The venerable Karl Marx held the belief that “capitalist production is hostile to certain branches of spiritual production for example in

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art and poetry” (Marx 1863, vol. I, cap. 4, §16). This thesis could be considered more or less valid up until World War I.

However, after this first great disaster of the twentieth century, things changed significantly. In the 1920s and 1930s, the first clear signs of conciliation began to appear. If not the first but perhaps the most representative, Pablo Picasso is one of the first modern artists singled out by big capital (Fitzgerald 1995). His works were considered not only objects of desire but also assets for investment. With him, the art market took a quantum leap and began a new system of art, in which, two generations later, there is extensive economic activity around contemporary art.

Marx’s belief in the antiartistic nature of capital has, thus, been proven false by late capitalism. This economic system has unlimited potential to turn anything into a commodity and make great profits with high art, music, scholarly literature, and not only with what Theodor W. Adorno criticizes as lowbrow “cultural industry.” However, the counterthesis of Marx, that art is hostile to capitalism, has often been true since the days of Romanticism, when he coined the false idea of the natural immunity of art to commodification. Art as a form of criticism of the many social shortcomings of the ethical and political failures and distortions present in contemporary societies has been a persistent practice in the art world since the beginning of modern society. It has also been seen as a means to repair or compensate for the earlier-stated shortcomings proposed by Friedrich Schiller in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* as early as 1795. All of these critical capacities have been conditioned, however, by the powerful capacity of neutralization by the system, in such a way that the history of art since 1900 can be interpreted as a never-ending game to resist and avoid neutralization and to maintain its potential to be critical; a game which, in almost all cases, ends with the defeat of the art form and an obligation to move into new terrain in order to continue to advance its critical claims. Dadaism represents a canonical movement in this permanent game.

One aspect of this competition has emerged as a dialectics of artification and de-artification, in the sense that art has been seen as forced to forever change its properties and qualities, leaving behind some of them for the sake of preserving its critical strength. The first and most notable of these qualities was beauty, considered during the past centuries as the

main attribute of art up to the point that it was inconceivable that art could be something other than beautiful. This concept remained until as late as 1873, when Arthur Rimbaud wrote in the prolog of *Une saison en enfer*:

Un soir, j'ai assis la Beauté sur mes genoux. – Et je l'ai
trouvée amère. – Et je l'ai injuriée.
[One evening I sat Beauty on my knees – And
I found her bitter – And I reviled her.]

These verses summarize the central point of the poetics of a great number of artists in the twentieth century. Beauty is converted into an object of abuse and contempt in the art of the majority of artists (Danto 2003) and is substituted for other new qualities of negative character with respect to beauty. To mention only a few: ugliness (Azara 1990; Eco 2011), the informal (Krauss et al. 1997), abjection (Bataille 1970; Kristeva 1982), the conceptual (Lippard 1973), or the immaterial (Lyotard et al. 1985). It is in this context that phenomena of this character can be understood and grouped under the title “de-aestheticization.” This term can be placed within this antagonistic game since the avant-garde moment, as a reaction to the phenomenon of neutralizing aestheticization or anaestheticization. Tracing the origins of the phenomenon of de-aestheticization, one must only look back to the ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp, the great avant-garde pioneer who was opposed to “retinal art” (e.g., aesthetic). The famous *Fountain* of 1917 does not lack an aesthetic dimension—all works of art have such a dimension. However, the aesthetic does not define it as an artwork. Those who appreciate the aesthetic qualities of that ready-made are not, in fact, seeing Duchamp’s piece of art, which is conceptual and not retinal (Danto 2000; Mohn 2005).

From Dadaism to Minimalism and the Conceptualisms, the avant-garde appear to be dominated by a strategy of de-aestheticization. Many artists view the aesthetic not only as something that does not respond to the struggle of the avant-garde, but also as something irrelevant to the nature of art as such. In fact, although it might seem surprising, these ideas can even be found in the program of some prominent abstract expressionists. Thus, in 1948, Barnett Newman upheld in his

famous essay “The Sublime Is Now” that “the impulse of modern art is the desire to destroy beauty.” The culminating point in this perspective, however, came about in the 1970s. The minimalist artist Robert Morris, for example, published in 1963 his *Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal*, and the conceptualist Joseph Kosuth in his manifesto *Art after Philosophy* in 1969 reject the connection between art and aesthetic.¹ This is a strategy that will also be recognized and supported by theory, criticism, and a philosophy of art up until recent years. However, this is not a history that can be explained here. In the following section, we will continue to clarify the diverse meanings of all of these tongue-twisting terminologies. Following this, we will examine the general evolutionary process of de-aestheticization in the postmodern period under the heading “Anti-aesthetic” (Roelops 2014; Mattick 1993). I will conclude the argument with some reflection on the contemporary situation with the evident crisis of the anti-aesthetic and the return of beauty as a strong source of criticism and resistance.

Aestheticization, Anaestheticization, and De-aestheticization

To begin with, it must be made clear that aestheticization is a term with multiple meanings that can perhaps be broken down into three principles. First, it means something *emergent*, an event or an epiphany. This first meaning refers to a historical process, cultural and institutional, from which what appears or emerges is a sphere of aesthetics, a differentiated sphere of cultural phenomena such as autonomous art, separate from handicrafts arts. Several discursive practices also emerge around the fine arts, such as art criticism, philosophical aesthetics, and the philosophy of art. Some new institutions appear such as the Salons and the museums and later commercial art galleries and the art dealers. During the nineteenth century, a following arose out of fashion, design, decoration, advertisement, and styling. Successively, there was growing importance in film, TV, internet; the multiplication of contemporary art centers and art biennials, and so on; a visual turn in culture in general; later, avant-garde gastronomy, food aesthetics, and so on. The French philosopher Jacques

Rancière (2013) has used the term “aesthetic regime” to refer to this form of existence and visibility in art which has its initial stages in the eighteenth century—a form which we continue to be in.

Aestheticization, then, in this sense, means that works of art, as we understand them today, emerge, are made possible by a new aesthetic, cultural order.

So, for example, we can take an object of religious art such as an altar-piece of Madonna and Baby Jesus out of its ecclesial and liturgical context and hang it on a wall of a museum as a work of art, as something aesthetic, so as to contemplate its aesthetics and not as an object of worship. Doing so, the aesthetic dimension, which was always present, moves into the foreground, whereas before, there was a functional dimension, be it religious, political, educational, or representational. The emergence of the *aisthesis* is a historical event that implies the progressive appearance of a new regime of visibility of art, a new mode of identification of the same, a new *partage du sensible* or distribution of the sensible (Rancière 2004).

Second, the term aestheticization means a *transformation*, a metamorphosis, or mutation. So we also call aestheticization a process in which the nonaesthetic becomes aesthetic, something preexisting that metamorphoses into something aesthetic. For example, the creation of the “homo aestheticus,” that is, the genesis of the aesthetic subject together alongside the subject of law or the citizen. The following implies the subjectification of what is beautiful, of the art, of the values, of the culture; the transformation of the world into “an occasion” for the subjects’ own experiences; or the so-called “aestheticization of the lifeworld.” Undoubtedly, these are all phenomena which are related to the development of an “aesthetic regime” of art, but also have their parallel objectives and are institutional in other dimensions of the culture, in many cases in a fuzzy separate frontier, as in the case of design, decoration, advertising, food, fashion, and culture of the body. The development of the “homo aestheticus” in these areas has converted the true process of aestheticization, with a victory for beauty in contrast to what happened with art, where beauty has been systematically persecuted and driven into exile. This victory for aestheticization in various fields of production and consumption has

even driven some scholars to propose a change in the definition for contemporary capitalism to be “artistic capitalism” (Lipovetsky and Serroy 2013).

Third, we can also call aestheticization a *restructuring*, readjustment, or reorganization. We can call this phenomena aestheticization for the aesthetic dimension something acquires a preponderance or precedence over other dimensions (normative, cognitive, religious, etc.). This is a phenomenon that restructures the integrated dimensions within the object. For example, we speak of aestheticization in the third sense when, as Walter Benjamin did, one criticizes the aestheticization of politics, because political arguments are substituted for commercial slogans and the image of politicians are sold like commercial brands or pop music (“Yes, we can”). We can also label cases of aestheticization in certain graphic newspaper reports or in documentaries in which pain, violence, or misery has been transformed into images for consumption, as with any other image in the market. Of course, this happens in many contemporary works of art with the aim of being critical, political, subversive, and resistant. The aestheticization of the works of art is essentially a mechanism of neutralization by the capitalist system to water down the controversial art so as to end up with a beautiful product, an object of desire for rich collectors and art institutions in all democratic societies.

The aestheticization, understood as neutralization of other dimensions such as the moral or political, allows us to delve into defining another term in this conceptual constellation that we are trying to clarify: anaestheticization. Anaesthetics is the contrary of the aesthetic. By the end of the 1930s, Walter Benjamin had already identified some phenomena in the development of new modes of perception arising from new technologies, leading to the anaestheticization of the perceptive capacities of the receptor. In this way, by bombarding the eye with a large number of fragmentary impressions, the result is that the eye does not register anything, so the simultaneity of overstimulation of sight produces numbness, and forgetfulness, causing a kind of perceptual anesthesia. Also, during the same period as Benjamin, his friend Adorno spoke about the “regression of listening” such as the loss of the ability to hear, especially to hear something new, a loss that, for Adorno, meant a loss of liberty and encouraged submission. The anaestheticization of reception is a technique

that permits the aesthetic perception of a scene with detached pleasure, even when this scene is the preparation of a ritual, in a society, so that one does not question the sacrifice and, in the last instance, the violence, destruction, murder, and death. Paradigmatically, this is exactly what happens in the film by Leni Riefensathal *Triumph of the Will* in 1935. The aestheticization of politics, criticized by Benjamin, shows the other face of the anaesthetization of reception (Buck-Morss 1992). Another theory in a different line, however, is that of the German philosopher Wolfgang Iser in his work "Ästhetik und Anästhetik" (Iser 1990). In it, he defines "anaesthetic" not as contrary to the aesthetic, but rather complementary, as it overcomes the limits of perception in those forms of contemporary art in which the aesthetic dimension has little importance, as is the case in Conceptualisms and postconceptualisms.

We can conclude our brief journey of definitions with the one which, in the end, most interests us here. De-aestheticization should be understood as a devaluation of traditional aesthetics qualities, such as harmony, proportion, grace, beauty, charm, and so on, in favor of other qualities that were once considered nonaesthetics, anti-aesthetics, or of poor taste, such as the case of kitsch before it was accepted as a noble form of the aesthetic at the end of the 1980s. The traditional aesthetics qualities were usually linked to the pleasure they offered, while the new qualities, on the other hand, had more to do with newness, shock, interest, and, in some cases, with contrasting emotions to pleasure, even disgust, something Kant considered to be the insurmountable limit of what can be considered aesthetic. In this way, Adorno was in favor of a negative aesthetic, opposed to the traditional hedonism, as a way to preserve the critical potential of art. The unconstrained atonality of Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg, and Anton Webern in music, the distressing prose of Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett, or paintings such as the *Guernica* of Picasso or the canvases of Paul Klee represented, for Adorno, examples of this type of unaestheticized avant-garde art.

After World War II, the experimental arts such as the *combines* of Robert Rauschenberg, the installations of Allan Kaprow, the performances of the Viennese action-artists, the critical pop of Edward Kienholz, the minimalist works on felt by Robert Morris or the works of most of the conceptualists in general can be understood as the successive exploration

into different modes of resisting commodification and neutralization of the critical power of art opposing assimilating forms of art such as abstract expressionism and pop art. The search for an art that cannot be made into a kind of merchandise, that cannot be adapted to museums, and that cannot be assimilated is what a good many contemporary artists are committed to. Not all of course. Some big names in the art world in the last decades are foreign to the game of critical resistance.

Jeff Koons, Damien Hirst, David Hockney, or Takashi Murakami represents a kind of art that has no problem with the market and power structures—quite the contrary. That does not mean, however, that their works praise the established order. What it means is that in neither the intention of the artist nor the effects of their works can we find criticism of power, of money, of injustice, of inequality, of prejudice, or the disregard for other people except in the form of mechanisms seeking an advertising effect, as in the notable case of Hirst. As proof of this, we can see that in the works of artists of this type, we cannot find a trace of the programmed de-aestheticization of the art that was in the center of the poetics of socially critical art. Theirs are fully aesthetic works. In the following section, we are going to go over some logical and historical moments of the last 30 years of the stated program.

The Postmodern Crisis and the Contemporary: Aesthetic and Anti-aesthetic

In 1983, the young Hal Foster edited *The Anti-aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, a celebrated collection of articles by philosophers and art critics. It marks a milestone in the understanding of the evolution of art and contemporary culture, and continues today to be an indispensable reference. In their texts, Jürgen Habermas, Jean Baudrillard, Frederic Jameson, Rosalind Krauss, Craig Owens, Edward Said, and Kenneth Frampton discussed the meaning of what was happening in the art world and in contemporary culture under the sign of the word “postmodernism.” The stated concept etymologically only marks the “after” point of modernity without positively identifying what it could consist in or what it meant, and, most importantly, two questions without any clear answers:

on the one hand, is the question of the end of modern art and the avant-garde; and on the other hand, is the question of the crisis of the political left and the projects of emancipation that have been, generally speaking, linked with modern art and the avant-garde.

The answers that were given by the art world to these questions were varied and known. While it is never easy to generalize when speaking about art, and while there are always exceptions and difficult cases to situate, we could affirm that there were two significant tendencies in post-modernism with relation to the aesthetic: the conservative or defeatist affirmation of the aesthetic and the option to resist of the anti-aesthetic. So, on the one hand, we can have those that find in the aesthetic a kind of consolation to the failure of projects to transform the world. In the visual arts, there is a moment in which this option is more observable. The stated postmodern painting could constitute a model. The Italian transavantgarde of Mimmo Paladino, Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Nicola di Maria, or Carlo Maria Mariani constitutes a portentous example of this defeatist trend. The movement began as a massive marketing scheme designed by the art critic Achille Bonito Oliva, who was looking to sell the works of artists who had given up on the idea of critical, unaestheticized art to embrace the market of the rich and new institutions of contemporary art that were starting to proliferate in all large and mid-sized cities around the developing first world. They worked with large formats, adequate for museums or large mansions, and with a slightly symbolic touch, but were mostly just beautiful and decorative. The marketing operation was in fact a success, seeing that the works of the Italian transavantgarde can be found in all of the contemporary art collections throughout the world.

Something similar could be said about most of the neoexpressionists, such as Julian Schnabel, Michel Basquiat, Miquel Barceló, Georg Baselitz, Markus Lüpertz, or Reiner Fetting, although some, such as, Jörg Immendorf or Anselm Kiefer, whose works are very much politically charged cannot be placed alongside the others. In the early 1980s, it seemed that modern art had lost its vigor, that it had exhausted its critical energy, and that it had shifted toward a semblance of “beautiful art” that remains in the qualification of “interesting,” as was held in 1985 by the great art critic Robert Hughes in *Time* magazine.²

The other major tendency in the period is what Hal Foster christened as the “anti-aesthetic.” In his presentation of the volume stated above, Foster affirms that the term “anti-aesthetic” is not a sign of nihilism that is aimed at the destruction of art or the representation of it, but rather that it had a critical character which meant more than anything that there is no representation without a political meaning. I quote him:

“Anti-aesthetic” also signals that the very notion of the aesthetic, its network of ideas, is in question here: the idea that aesthetic experience exists apart, without “purpose,” all but beyond history, or that art can now effect a world at once (inter)subjective, concrete and universal a symbolic totality. Like “postmodernism,” then, “anti-aesthetic” marks a cultural position on the present: are categories afforded by the aesthetic still valid? (For example, is the model of subjective taste not threatened by mass mediation, or that of universal vision by the rise of other cultures?) More locally, “anti-aesthetic” also signals a practice, cross-disciplinary in nature, that is sensitive to cultural forms engaged in a politic (e.g., feminist art) or rooted in a vernacular – that is, to forms that deny the idea of a privileged aesthetic realm. (Foster 1983, xv)

So, for Foster, it has been definitely overcome that period of the avant-garde so well characterized by Adorno, in which he states the aesthetic had a subversive function as something that has no function in a world where everything has a function. So, art, then, brings disorder to the organized world of capitalist functionalism, and becomes in this way a model of freedom. From this point forward, it was necessary to establish a distinct strategy toward Adorno’s “negative commitment.” It was necessary to search for a new strategy of interference that truly allowed for a lucid resistance conscious of its limits. The aesthetic transgression was no longer able to have the subversive force it once did. The transgression had been incorporated into the market logic, so normal today in advertising. New strategies have more to do with what Foster (1985) called the “recodification” (1985), with the *détournement* of the artists of the Situationist International, the “counter-appropriation,” claiming allegorical procedures and manifest political intention.

The group centered around the art theory journal *October*, founded by Rosalind Krauss in 1976 and of which the very own Foster was a part, was perhaps the beacon of intellectual light most representative of this tendency in terms of art criticism. Craig Owens, Benjamin Buchloh, Thomas McEvilly, Douglas Crimp, Frederic Jameson, and many others were defenders of this anti-aesthetic tendency in post-modern art and dedicated themselves to bless those artists whose work conformed to the normative concept of art they had chosen. All of those critics supported Foster's analysis and discursive reasoning of the philosophical idea of some of the most radical authors of the time—Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, and Jean Baudrillard—and nobly contributed to the intellectualization of the practices of contemporary artists, which are currently the norm.

Due to its complex composition, it is not easy to make a simple exemplification of the anti-aesthetic tendency, as we have done when commenting on the conservative tendency. It includes, in large part, many artists who have worked in the area of identity: feminists, gays and lesbians, ethnic minorities, immigrants, postcolonial issues, decolonization, and dewesternization. It also deals with questions of repressed memories, the forgotten or underappreciated. Of course, the artists also worked in denouncing various forms of violence and the ideological manipulation practiced by the dominating society and the powers holding down the people across the world, particularly those who were humiliated and offended. I will give a few examples. One which is frequently referenced in current discussions is Mary Kelly's feminist work *Post-Partum Document*, which was actually made in 1973–79, but achieved great recognition for its anti-aesthetic tendency in the 1980s and 1990s, and is now considered a classic. Her work is a set of documents (mainly fragments of text, clinical analysis, pictures and drawings, most of them with doodles), currently displayed as small panels hanging on the wall, which deal with Kelly's relationship with her child for the first six years after his birth. The Tate Modern in London, where it can currently be seen, wrote the following on this work, which can be difficult to understand without instructions of some form:

These panels form one section of a larger six-part work that documents the relationship between Kelly and her son over a period of six years. Drawing on contemporary feminist thought, and in particular on psychoanalysis, it explores the contradictions for a woman artist between her creative and procreative roles. The work, says Kelly, traces the differences between “my lived experience as a mother and my analysis of that experience.” To make these panels Kelly recorded and then reflected on a number of conversations with her son, before finally allowing him to scribble across her carefully documented texts.

Another well-known example is Nan Goldin’s *The Ballade of Sexual Dependency*, which is made up of photographs taken by the author of her private world between 1979 and 1984. The title is borrowed from a ballad of the *Drei Groschen Oper* of Berthold Brecht and Kurt Weill. This work is a kind of visual diary in which every aspect of the private and public life of the artist and her friends and family is exposed, transfiguring a private album into a public artwork that deals with AIDS, friendship, drugs, death, and love. We could also choose a third example in the work by Allan Sekula’s *Fish Story*, which was produced at a number of locations between 1987 and 1995, in which he charts the geography of the capitalist maritime industry and the working class that depends on it. The work documents the world of shipping container transportation, which is normally away from the public eye in most port cities in the developed world. The documentation of Sekula, based primarily on photography, celebrated “a grotesque triple funeral, for painting, for socialism, and for the sea.” We have a final example in those strategies that not only choose the de-aestheticization route but which are literally anti-aesthetic. Artists who have worked directly with the wretched, the repugnant and disgusting are extensive. This is not a matter of irony, such as the case of the artist Piero Mazoni, who in his 1961 *Merda d’artista* composed 90 small tins whose supposed content was 30 grams of shit and whose established value was their weight in gold. His objective in this work was a harsh criticism of the art market. One of these tins was sold in the market in 2007 for €124,000, and it turns out that the Mazoni tins are actually full of plaster and not real shit. In contrast, some contemporary artists have investigated more direct strategies of representation or performativity with the wretched

and repugnant. As did Cindy Sherman in some of her photographs; Paul McCarthy and his unclean performances using feces or sauces; or the photographic work of artists such as Joel-Peter Witkin or David Nebreda, who use cadavers, amputated limb, or sick or tortured bodies, all of which are real; or finally those feminist artists such as Carina Úbeda or Emma Arvida Bystrom, who work with their own menstruation as a means of defending their identity as women.

We have to stop giving examples, but I wanted to end this section with a supplementary reflection. It is true that anti-aesthetic art is de-aestheticized art, in the sense that the aesthetic dimension does not matter much to the artist and that it is considered, in the best of cases, as something secondary and that these works do not usually appear to be works of art, either traditionally or of modern art, given that their typical formats are documentations, files, video interviews, and theoretical discourses. In that sense, it is therefore de-artificated art. First, however, this does not mean that these works do not have an “aesthetic.” All of them have an aesthetic. But in a sense, the aim of these works is to be like a scientific theory: it does not matter if they are written on a chalkboard with chalk or are printed on paper in Arial font—they are always the same theory. This, however, is debatable. In art, the aesthetic dimension is never negligible. The format, for example, of a work of documentation can always be done in different ways, and different formats can determine experiences of the work distinctly to a much greater degree than is so with painting or sculptures, always conditioned mainly by “the power of place.” Second, it is also untrue that all works that have an anti-aesthetic tendency are de-aestheticized works. The works of some artists have a marked aesthetic component, such as primary dimension. This was the case with the work of Barbara Kruger, who was paradigmatic with this tendency in the 1980s and 1990s. The works of Kruger used the resources of billboards and advertisements in general so as to recode or redefine in the normally used formats, alter their meaning in order to transmit politically critical messages regarding the state of women or of the ruling powers. Some of the great artists in political art in the last 30 years, such as Hans Haacke, Martha Rosler, or Raymond Pettibon, have used this type of strategy to break down the cultural codes of the masses to use them critically against the power.

In any case, the anti-aesthetics strategy continues today and there is no sign it is going to disappear. It deals with strategies of artistic research which, once legitimized, have been socially accepted, (at least up to a certain point) and, in the delta of modern art in which we find ourselves, will continue to be paths of exploration to criticize society in order to search for the activation of a transformative power in art. So, we can say that there is no end to the anti-aesthetic on the horizon, but some decline. There are some symptoms of it. For example, in recent years, there has been a kind of end of the abuse and injury of beauty that has been occurring in the past 100 years, more or less (Beech 2009).

The Decline of the Anti-aesthetic and the Politics of Beauty

The beginning of a turning point with respect to the consuetudinary abuse of beauty in the twentieth century could be situated just at the end of the millennium. In 1999, the Hirschhorn Museum in Washington marked its 25th anniversary with an exhibition entitled *Regarding Beauty: A View of the Late Twentieth Century*, and France's official celebration of the millennium turned Avignon into a giant viewing space for *La Beauté*. Since then, what has arisen from this is something that could be classified as a kind of return or revival of beauty. A return that has come accompanied, as it could not exist otherwise, by an important critical and theoretical conscience (Foster 1993; Halsall et al. 2009), without which the world of contemporary art, with all of its complexity, plurality, and magnitude, and now being global, would be completely unintelligible.

In the years before the exposition in the Hirschhorn Museum, some critics tried to do a reassessment of beauty for contemporary art. In consequence, David Hickey (2012) is at the top of a list in which we can find Peter Schjeldahl, Peter Plagens, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, and Bill Beckley. Hickey's book, published in 1993, was more of a manifesto than a serene descriptive work. In it, the artist and theorist puts forth a defense of beauty against all intellectualized interpretations that he considered naive and reactionary. However, it was not until entering the new millennium that some real substantial works came up. We can reference in this case

the books of Elaine Scarry (1999), Wendy Steiner (2001), Arthur Danto (2003, 2004), and Alexander Nehamas (2007). All of these works are undoubtedly important; however, the most influential work might perhaps be that of Arthur Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty* (2003).

Danto had already participated in the catalog of the exposition at Hirschhorn with a text on the theme. However, his book in 2003 expounded at length on how and why in the twenty-first century, art had endured this *kalliphobia*, which is a kind of hate and contempt with regard to beauty, and why the aesthetic had come progressively to be considered, over the course of the century, as something secondary. Previously, the awareness of the ugliness in modern art, to put it as in the title of the book by Pedro Azara (1990), was a valid common cliché for a good part of the century. However, it had not been critically evaluated in a serious manner. The wide circulation of the text by Danto contributed decisively to this critical reconsideration and the questioning of the commonplace. The analysis by Danto led to the conclusion that if the importance of the aesthetic could not be anything else but relative in modern art, beauty instead results to be an inalienable option among the various strategies of art, because beauty would be in fact essential for life. Danto wrote:

[T]he difference between beauty and the countless other aesthetic qualities is that beauty is the only one that has a claim to be a value, as truth and goodness. The annihilation of good beauty would leave us with an unbearable world, as the annihilation of good would leave us with a world in which a fully human life would be unlivable. (Danto 2003, 60)

If we think about it, the contemporary situation does not cease to astound. In the nineteenth century, the generation and creation of beauty was a fundamental object of the arts, so the title “fine arts” or “beaux arts” was not in vain. Nowadays, on the contrary, the production of beauty is something that is found almost exclusively in the domain of fashion, marketing, decoration, and design. We are living in an authentic triumph of the aesthetic; however, in art it is almost a minor domain. This means that beauty and the aesthetic area are clearly situated in the marketplace. Capitalism today is not only the kingdom of the merchandise, as Marx

put it in the beginning of *Capital*, but it also presents us an immense accumulation of beautiful goods, including what is produced by the body-beauty industry. Those who wish to escape the empire of commodification do not even have the resources to direct themselves toward the art of the past, the beautiful art of the Renaissance or of the Rococo, mainly because access to this inevitably comes under the title of the tourist consumer culture.

Practically, the only area where it is still possible to experience beauty and the aesthetic from capitalist relations is in the domain of the aesthetics of nature. The aesthetic sensitivity in relation to nature, which was rejected by the modernists since Charles Baudelaire, who rejected it from his vision of modern life, is a kind of refuge from the implacable logic of subsumption to capital in all aspects of social relationships and life. The importance of the aesthetic experience of nature in the late capitalism, as a compensation and hope of another form of life, was already recognized by Adorno in his posthumous *Aesthetic Theory* in 1970.³ Since then, it has continued to mature as a central element of defensive movements of nature and environmental protection, which is something that explains the development of the aesthetics of nature in recent times. This is a kind of thinking that had practically disappeared since the times of Hegel and now experiences an important renaissance.

The revival of beauty, which has occurred in recent times, has to do with the reflection that we should not put the creation of beauty exclusively in the hands of industry, which will only turn it into some kind of merchandise. Beauty can be, at least, another strategy within the contemporary arts, which is applied as a means of critical opposition to the authority of the ruling powers. Beauty does not necessarily have to be automatic or inevitable, something insincere, escapist, or reactionary, or a kind of deal with the state of existing things. Beauty in a world that is ugly, unauthentic, and false can have a strong, critical, subversive effect. It can continue being that *promesse de bonheur*, that promise of happiness, as Stendhal put it. In contemporary art, beauty can be presented as the versified imperative one faces in experiencing it. Rainer Maria Rilke versified it in his *Torso* when he said “Du musst dein Leben ändern” or “you must change your life.” Beauty can be an antagonistic strategy. However, is it, in fact, one?

Examples of the existence of this strategy, in contemporary art, are numerous. They are explored with more or less precision by some of the more renowned contemporary artists who have not given into the market and the society of the spectacle. Among them, we can reference: William Kentridge, Jeff Wall, Anish Kapoor, Anri Sala, Pipilotti Rist, Olafur Eliasson, Cristina Iglesias, and many others.

On the other hand, one should not overlook what Michael Kelly (2012) has labeled “the Richter Effect.” The German artist Gerhard Richter is, without doubt, one of the most important living artists. His art is acclaimed as such for his onerous political critique by those in the *October* group, with a number of laudatory studies on his works, and is also well regarded by conservative critiques. Richter is basically a painter using different languages. He is versed in the figurative, but also in the abstraction, in political works, and even in landscaping. In fact, he has demonstrated that contemporary art does not have to be necessarily post-media and that it can carry on with the great traditions: Richter continues with the pictorial tradition of the North that goes back to the romantics and which was studied by Robert Rosenblum in his well-known studio, which united Caspar David Friedrich with Mark Rothko. In this sense, the work of Richter is so fully aesthetic, being one that has never given into the language game of the anti-aesthetic.

To complicate the figure, Richter is also one of the highest remunerated living artists, if not the highest, alongside Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst. Without doubt, Richter embodies the tensions and complexities in which art lives today, and his work evidences that the de-aestheticization and rejection of beauty are not obligatory strategies for contemporary art.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, I think that it is likely that in the times to come, as ugly as they may be, we will see in art a rebirth with aesthetic affection and a reclaiming of land by beauty as the antagonist of merchandising. So, as was the case in 1970s, in which the defenders of the civil rights of citizens of color in the United States coined the term “Black is beautiful,” artists can also coin, with complete legitimacy, a new reactionary slogan for

those who have reified the anti-aesthetic in order to convert it into the mandatory: “Art is beautiful.” In the end, as James Elkins (2013) wants, perhaps we might find ourselves already *beyond the aesthetic and the anti-aesthetic*.

In addition, this return of the beauty and the aesthetic is not a strategy exclusive to the visual arts. For example, there is an ongoing movement in the performing arts, such as the prominent recent study by Heinrich Falk (2014) confirms. Contemporary dance, circus, and music are increasing the number of artists working in the realm of beauty. Not to forget contemporary music, where both acclaimed seniors such as John Adams or Kaija Saariaho and young composers such as Jörg Widmann or Tan Dun are exploring new possibilities for engaging music in the field of beauty. Nonetheless, to confirm the existence and meaning of such a general tendency in the totality of the arts, we need a greater temporal perspective.

Notes

1. Robert Morris: “The undersigned ... being the maker of the metal construction entitled *Litanies* ... hereby withdraws from said construction all aesthetic quality and content and declares that from the date hereof said construction has no such quality and content.” Quoted in Harold Rosenberg (1972, 28). Joseph Kosuth in his text of 1969, *Art after Philosophy*: “It is necessary to separate aesthetics from art.” Since art once had an important decorative function, “any branch of philosophy that dealt with ‘beauty’ and thus, taste, was inevitably duty bound to discuss art as well. Out of this ‘habit’ grew the notion that there was a conceptual connection between art and aesthetics, which is not true.”
2. “Today more than ever, the buzz word among American collectors is ‘interesting’. These four bland syllables are in fact highly coded. The earlier word was ‘quality’, whose utterance was meant to mark off a given artwork from the swarm of others and confirm the precision of a collector’s taste. Interesting has the opposite effect. It suspends judgment, covers the rear, and defends the vacuum-cleaner habits of a cultural mass market without precedent in art history. It states, with a sort of coy defiance, that buying this, uh, *thang* may not be a mistake, even though its owner does

not know what to say about it. It acknowledges that by the time thoughtful aesthetic judgment is passed – a distant prospect, given the promotional state of too much American art criticism – the price has trebled, the boat has sailed, the artist has turned 31, and it is now time to chatter about ‘contemporary masterpieces’, meaning formerly ‘interesting’ art that after four years, carries a \$20000 to \$50000 price tag.” Robert Hughes, “Careerism and Hype amidst the Image Haze,” *Time*, June 17, 1985, 46.

3. “So long as progress, deformed by utilitarianism, does violence to the surface of the earth, it will be impossible – in spite of all proof to the contrary – completely to counter the perception that what ante dates the trend is in its backwardness better and more humane. Rationalization is not yet rational; the universality of mediation has yet to be transformed into living life ... Natural beauty is the trace of the non-identical in things under the spell of universal identity. As long as this spell prevails, the non-identical has no positive existence. Therefore natural beauty remains as dispersed and uncertain as what it promises, that which surpasses all human immanence” (Adorno 2002, 64, 73).

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9

Artivism and the Spirit of Avant-Garde Art

Dagmar Danko

A New Art Form?

Piled-up tents, posters and photographs, flyers, banners, and documentaries—such were some of the vestiges of protest actions on display at the renowned ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie)—Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany, during the exhibition *global aCtIVISm* curated by its director Peter Weibel in 2013–14 (Fig. 9.1). Instead of questioning whether these objects, materials, and installations are works of art at all, the main text accompanying the exhibition—printed in the leaflet and available online—boldly states: “This fusion of activism and art, or ‘Artivism,’ is arguably the first new art form of the twenty-first century” (Weibel 2013).

Artivism is a portmanteau word which combines “art” and “activism” and which has been in use for well over ten years by now. This coincides—probably not by chance—with the rise of antiglobalist protest movements at the turn of the millennium (notably in Seattle

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Fig. 9.1 Exhibition view of *global aCtIVISM* at the ZKM | Museum für Neue Kunst (Photo: Wootton © ZKM | Karlsruhe 2013)

in 1999) and, above all, with the capitalism-critical protest movements that have been reacting to the financial crisis since 2007–08. In 2010, the first comprehensive book on the matter was published in France (Lemoine and Ouardi 2010), only recently followed by more publications explicitly using the term (e.g., Schmitz 2015; Voigt 2015). Indeed, there is no lack of publications concerned with Artivism¹ in one form or another, albeit, significantly, one has to look for these books and articles in the disparate fields of political theory and sociology, art history and theory, philosophy and contemporary history, as well as in the proliferating field of overviews written by art critics or curators and guidebooks advising the reader on how to best organize protest actions.

Many of these publications, however, are concerned with *either* the artistic aspect of Artivism *or* the political one, tending to opt for a discussion *either* within the realm of art *or* within the realm of politics. Only few authors attempt to take into account both sides, and it is precisely their analyses which have become works of reference for subsequent analysts and activists alike—in particular Nicolas Bourriaud’s

Relational Aesthetics (2002), Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells* (2012), and the writings of Jacques Rancière, for example, the essays assembled in *Le spectateur émancipé* (2008). Yet, even their studies, oddly but understandably, cleave to works of art definable as such for having been made by recognized artists such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Rirkrit Tiravanija, Alfredo Jaar and Martha Rosler; or, alternatively, they openly disregard the kind of "activist or interventionist art" under scrutiny here (Bishop 2012, 5). This is an understandable approach because it is a *practical* one: in a wish to illustrate their ideas,² they refer to examples that do not defy their (written) description and that some readers might even be familiar with. It is one way of dealing with the paradox posed by new, possibly avant-garde art forms, which usually transgress boundaries previously left intact and which irritate both the art aficionado and the expert. Are we dealing with art? How can we think about this without skipping the question of art/nonart in advance? How can we talk about what is still unfolding right in front of our eyes? In this context, the exhibition at the ZKM is particularly telling. For the uninformed visitor, it was impossible to distinguish the documents attesting preceding protest actions from the art installation *State Britain* (2007) by the recognized artist Mark Wallinger, for which he was awarded the prestigious Turner Prize (Fig. 9.2). This installation takes the form of a reconstructed "peace camp" mounted by the late activist Brian Haw, who inhabited it for several years, protesting against the participation of the United Kingdom in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The signboards, banners, photographs, and small objects merge with almost-identical remains from similar camps that had been in place around the world. Perhaps even more puzzling was the display in the largest exhibition hall of the Kunst-Werke in Berlin during the 7th Berlin Biennale in 2012. The visitor entered a fully functional protest camp run by activists of Occupy and Movimiento 15-M. One of the biggest banners stated: "THIS IS NOT OUR MUSEUM. THIS IS YOUR ACTION SPACE." Works of art or of political protest? Artivism remains ambiguous.

What I will attempt to do in the following contribution is to stand by Artivism's ambiguities while having what in German is called a *Kunstverdacht*



Fig. 9.2 Exhibition view of *global aCtIVISM* at the ZKM | Museum für Neue Kunst (Photo: Wootton © ZKM | Karlsruhe 2013)

(Janhsen 2007), an “art suspicion,” as I need to be able to reflect upon both Artivism as artistic practice and Artivism as political practice. In line with the intentions of the book at hand, the focus of my analysis will be not only on the questionable ascription of Artivism to art and/or politics, but also on its link to the impacts of the global capitalist economy and the so-called market-based turn since the 1980s and 1990s. I will begin with a few possible definitions of Artivism, continue with a short historical outline of art and activism movements, and proceed by presenting current examples from Western European and North American countries and from other parts of the world. Finally, I will analyze Artivism’s position vis-à-vis capitalism, consumerism, and societal utility.

Labeling Artivism

There is an abundance of definitions and names for what is tagged Artivism in the present contribution, which can be considered an indicator of this phenomenon’s persistently precarious status. Paraphrasing

Howard S. Becker's (1997, 9) interactionist labeling approach, one could simply say that "Artivism is what people so label," but here lies the problem: there is disagreement over the very fact. For this reason, authors choose a variety of expressions: Activist Art (Felshin 2006), Art Contextuel (Ardenne 2004), Art Engagé (Vander Gucht 2004) respectively Socially Engaged Art (Thompson 2012), Art Politique (Rancière 2008), Participatory Art (Bishop 2012), Relational Art (Bourriaud 2002), and many others still. The competing labels have a tendency to put emphasis on different aspects, even though the situations they describe often seem very much alike. The main dissent concerns the political ambition of the involved actors and the political outcome of the situations in question, which is why I will quote a definition which omits the political issue entirely:

Activist art, in both its forms and methods, is process- rather than object- or product-oriented, and it usually takes place in public sites rather than within the context of art-world venues. As a practice, it often takes the form of temporal interventions, such as performance or performance-based activities, media events, exhibitions, and installations. [...] A high degree of preliminary research, organizational activity, and orientation of participants is often at the heart of its collaborative methods of execution. (Felshin 2006, 10f)

The keywords that are provided here amount to the shortened version of Artivism as being a process-oriented, temporal, collaborative practice in public sites. Yet Artivism is more than that. It is also a decisively political practice, with often determinable claims. Theodor W. Adorno rejected this kind of art in his *Aesthetic Theory* (1997). Understanding art as the "social antithesis" of society, he called for its autonomy so that its social substance could unfold. In a comparable vein, Jacques Rancière (2008, 56–92) claims that critical art necessitates an "aesthetic distance," a "disconnection" from clearly defined social purposes, an observation which he calls the "paradoxes of political art." In other words, one could say that any kind of art still needs to be recognizable as art for taking effect. But in this case, the question remains: for taking effect where, in the world of art or in the world of politics? Niklas Luhmann (2000) set forth the theory of specific systems that operate via processes of communication.

Each and every system is identified by a binary code guiding its communicative acts: beautiful/ugly in the art system, power/not power in the political system. Artivism might be the one art–activist practice to which several codes apply.

For the art philosopher Boris Groys, this is a new phenomenon because current art activists “do not want to merely criticize the art system or the general political and social conditions under which this system functions. Rather, they want to change these conditions by means of art – not so much inside the art system but outside it, in reality itself” (Groys 2014, 1). Artivism is part of the “return of the political,” coined by Chantal Mouffe (2005), which makes it all the more a risky undertaking—for how can the activists make sure that the outcome of their activities is in accord with their intentions? This is a conundrum. Nathalie Heinich (2005, 313) even goes so far as to say that, generally speaking, the belief that avant-garde art is automatically committed to a political avant-garde, let alone leftist politics, belongs to the realm of fairy tales. Claire Bishop’s (2012, 284) assessment of Participatory Art—which she decidedly does not view as a “privileged political medium”—is certainly valid for Artivism as well: it “is as uncertain and precarious as democracy itself; neither are legitimated in advance but need continually to be performed and tested in every specific context” (ibid.).

Neither analyses of content (politics) nor of form (aesthetics) suffice when examining Artivism. Just as important are its context (situational, societal, cultural, political, economic) and its methods (process-oriented, collaborative, antihierarchical, self-organizing). One has to take into account Artivism in its entirety, and not just Artivism as art or Artivism as political action in order to arrive at an overall picture. The rather theoretical issues, as relevant as they may be, concerned with Artivism’s and similar art forms’ true character somewhat obscure their empirical reality. This is why I will now turn to first historical, then contemporary examples, but not without closing this part by quoting Felshin’s (2006, 13) legitimate and all the more pivotal question: “*But Is It Art?* [...] But does it matter?” (Ironically, it does, depending on the political and social context in which it takes place. I will revisit this point at a later stage.)

Precursors in the Twentieth Century

Artivism can be traced back to a number of artistic–political movements of the twentieth century. This century has seen the emergence of many art forms that engage in poststudio as well as experimental and performative practices since as early as 1916, when Dada entered the stage of the art world. Dada marked the beginning of what has come to be referred to as historical avant-garde art movements, which challenged the received traditions of art and deliberately provoked their public. These movements were political by being unconventional and by confronting the (political, social, and art) establishment with playful or aggressive absurdist actions. After World War II, the ideas and methods of Dada and the historical avant-garde art movements were taken up by the many new art movements arising during the 1960s. As these were paralleling, if not fueling, the manifold protest movements and countercultures spreading at that time, they represent another milestone on the road to Artivism in the twenty-first century. In this context, I wish to point out two central figures: Guy Debord and Joseph Beuys.

Debord (1994), the critical analyst of the consumerist and capitalist “society of the spectacle,” together with fellow artists, founded the Situationist International, active between 1957 and 1972. This group viewed art and politics as tightly related and developed unorthodox strategies for creating art, for instance, by “constructing” situations in which art could happen. They introduced key concepts to the art world that became very important to artivists, particularly the idea of *détournement*, the misappropriation or “hijacking” of an existing situation, expression, or object in order to turn its original meaning against itself. Especially for the systematic subversion of media messages and images, as well as of advertising, this practice has been highly virulent ever since. Joseph Beuys, for his part, coined the famous phrase “Everyone an artist” (“Jeder Mensch ein Künstler”) in relation to his so-called extended definition of art. Art as “Social Sculpture” meant to regard society as a work of art to which everyone could and should contribute. He himself staged performances and happenings that he considered as creative participation in social and political matters.

Since the 1970s, slowly but surely, Artivism has come to be a genre in its own right. For one thing, during the 1970s and 1980s, postmodern notions such as Jean-François Lyotard's (1988) "differend" stress the importance of dissent in opposition to the strive for mutual understanding and consensus as seen by Jürgen Habermas (1984); in so doing, Lyotard and fellow postmodernists promote and inspire opposition and resistance movements. For another thing, constant societal, cultural, political, and economic upheavals continue to offer occasions and incentives for artistic and political activism. In the mid-1990s, Felshin summarizes: "With one foot in the art world and the other in the world of political activism and community organizing, a remarkable hybrid emerged in the mid-1970s, expanded in the 1980s, and is reaching critical mass and becoming institutionalized in the 1990s" (Felshin 2006, 9). Undoubtedly, by now, this "hybrid" has become a permanent feature of contemporary artistic-political movements; however, Artivism, as conceived in this contribution (given that Felshin, .), strictly speaking, talks about Activist Art), is neither history, nor institutionalized. As mentioned at the beginning, the rise of antiglobalist and/or antihegemonic and/or anticapitalist protest movements at the turn of the millennium has repeatedly brought Artivism to the scene. Ultimately, this last point shows how closely linked Artivism is to political circumstances, while the importance of the art strategies of the 1960s shows how closely linked Artivism is to the realm of art. The precursors of Artivism come from both worlds.

Artivism Now, Part 1: Occupy

At this point, many an author writing about artistic-political practices informs the reader of actions, performances, happenings, interventions, and projects realized by established European and North American artists. Among the popular examples are Clegg & Guttman's installations in the public space, calling for the active participation of the local population; Jeremy Deller's reenactments of historical events and parades involving hundreds of people; Jochen Gerz's conceptual art projects

accompanied and shaped by civic surveys; Thomas Hirschhorn's *Monuments* aimed at the integration of marginalized residents in whichever city the installation project is staged; and, more recently, Kateřina Šedá's community-based projects encouraging neighbors to get to know each other, or The Yes Men's satirical anticorporate actions purposely blurring the lines between art and subversive activism (the seemingly documentary film *The Yes Men Fix the World* from 2009 was screened during the *global aCtIVISm* exhibition at the ZKM). As undeniably relevant for an examination of Artivism as these works of art activism are, most of them are a common feature of the literature presented here, so I prefer to turn to examples which are even more recent and lastingly ambiguous in regard to their ascription.

Artivism has played a major role in worldwide protest movements since the beginning of the 2000s. While antiglobalist demonstrations have been organized all the time, especially during the meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the G7/8 countries, the first half of the 2000s was marked by the massive antiwar demonstrations in reaction to the wars that followed 9/11 (and which led to Brian Haw's peace camp and the ensuing work of art by Mark Wallinger). The late 2000s saw the advent of the financial crisis and, for a time, the collapse of the capital market and the banking system, which provoked protest reactions known as the Occupy Movement. I want to focus on this in what follows.

Occupy emerged in the autumn of 2011, inspired by the Spanish protests that had begun in May (therefore, also called *Movimiento 15-M*) and the beginning of the Arab Spring earlier that year. The more general claims crystallize in the slogan "We are the 99%" as opposed to the 1% of the population privileged by the uneven distribution of wealth and income. The protesters and activists were (and are) directed against the current political and economic system, calling for basic human, civic, and workers' rights, a more human work world, and a fundamentally less hierarchical, goal-oriented society that continuously generates inequality and exclusion.

Occupy did not so much consist of organizing demonstrations and marches as of installing camps close to the respective city's financial cen-

ter. This is how the Occupy Movement was given its name: the protesters and activists actually *occupied* Wall Street in New York, as well as the “financial capital” of Germany and the European Union, Frankfurt, or the City of London, for weeks on end. The camps were inhabited non-stop, having been built with tents for all basic requirements and the necessary equipment. Special places were designated as centers for encounters, discussions, and cultural activities—for the Occupy activist not only protested against the status quo, but performatively showed what their protest was aimed at: they tried to *live* an alternative societal model. The Occupy camps were self-organized and “governed” by direct democracy; every participant was to contribute and help out however he or she could; goodwill, tolerance, and hearing each other out were highly valued.

From the very beginning, the movement was marked by the presence of artistic and/or creative projects. On the one hand, some of these projects resulted in artifacts visualizing the protesters’ claims (e.g., posters and images for t-shirts, blogs, etc.), while others resulted in art shows, poetry books, concerts, theater plays by artists, writers, musicians, and actors committed to the cause of the Occupy Movement. On the other hand, these projects were all meant to bring people together and create unity by having the protesters participate in collaborative and decidedly not output-driven, profit-oriented projects. But the ties with the realm of art are much more intricate than this. Occupy Wall Street, the most prominent Occupy encampment, which began on September 17, 2011 in New York’s Zuccotti Park, was originally (at least co-) launched by the Adbusters Media Foundation. Adbusters is a group that has been active for the past 25 years and is known for its anticonsumerist advertising and campaigns. Its most popular initiatives are the publishing of the *Adbusters Magazine* as well as the “TV Turnoff Week” and the “Buy Nothing Day,” which have been taking place since the 1990s every year in May and November, respectively. Adbusters also stands for democratic transparency and the freedom of speech, and promotes pro-environmental and grassroots movements. The founder and mastermind of Adbusters, Kalle Lasn, is greatly influenced by Debord and the Situationist International, and has developed the concept of the “culture jam” (2000) following their ideas and strategies. Adbusting and culture jamming work very

much in the sense of the *détournement*, which spins the meaning of a message, a sign, an image, or an event and directs it against itself. The intention is to subvert the mainstream consumerist society and to beat the big corporations at their own game. For instance, Adbusters' anticonsumerist, anticorporate advertising actually is "antiadvertising," placing logos and slogans of famous brands in new, unsettling but often amusing contexts. In view of the many negative repercussions of the financial crisis since 2007–08 and inspired by the Arab Spring in 2011, which effectively was organized via the use of social media and during which thousands occupied the main squares of their cities, Adbusters published the following call on their blog in July 2011: "#OCCUPYWALLSTREET – Are you ready for a Tahrir moment? On Sept 17, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street."³ The call ended up working in the way viral marketing does, spreading throughout a variety of communication channels and being taken over by many other groups and activists, for example, the "hacktivists" of the Internet group Anonymous.

Another initial spark for Occupy Wall Street might have been the site-specific, one-time-only performance *Ocularpation: Wall Street* by the artist Zefrey Throwell. It took place on Wall Street itself, in the early morning of August 1, 2011 and was executed by 50 volunteers, including Throwell. Throwell had investigated the professions and occupations typically pursued around Wall Street, among which was the obligatory stock trader, but also the personal assistant, the road-sweeper, the prostitute, the hot dog vendor, and so on. The volunteers and Throwell himself incorporated these Wall Street "professionals" (Throwell played the hot dog vendor: Fig. 9.3), the group acting as a representative stand-in for all of the financial system. For a few minutes, they first blended in with the morning routines on Wall Street, then began to strip off their clothes, all the while carrying on with their "work." Divesting themselves, they literally "exposed" Wall Street and denounced the lack of transparency in a place so eminently influential in the lives of millions of people (Fig. 9.4). The performance not only surprised and irritated the passers-by, but three actors were temporarily arrested by the police, guaranteeing publicity, while the rest of the group put their clothes back on and disappeared into



Fig. 9.3 Zefrey Throwell, *Ocularpation: Wall Street*, 2011 (Photo: Video still by Steven Day, courtesy Zefrey Throwell)



Fig. 9.4 Zefrey Throwell, *Ocularpation: Wall Street*, 2011 (Photo: Asa Gauen, courtesy Zefrey Throwell)

the crowd.⁴ The activist performance, subversive and provoking as it was, did not fail to produce an effect in the summer of 2011, at a time when an example of civil disobedience like this could easily take root. The joint venture of artistic practices and political protest would be a recurring tactic of Occupy, which took Zuccotti Park in the following month.

A year later, the curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale, Artur Żmijewski, said in an interview: “I think art is a perfect camouflage. Something that looks like art, but actually isn’t” (Żmijewski 2012, 167—Translation D.D.). This camouflage works in two ways though. On the one hand, it may (or may not, as I will show later) protect the activist, who uses the freedom of art and turns it into the freedom of speech he or she is not given in his or her society. On the other hand, and this point becomes manifest in exhibitions such as *global aCtIVISm*, the art ascription might camouflage the political message so much as to neutralize it. There is a thin line, which the activists camping in the Kunst-Werke during the Berlin Biennale (April 27 to July 1, 2012) were very much aware of. Officially having been invited by Żmijewski and his team, they were not expected to create art or anything in this sense, but simply to present their ideas and claims at one of the most important contemporary art events in Germany. In a way, the curator and his colleagues meant to offer them a “home” for the duration of the Biennale. And indeed, the activists more or less lived in the Kunst-Werke, holding discussions and lectures, preparing demonstrations, and so on (Fig. 9.5).

The camp was the first space the Biennale visitors entered when they came into the building, and many spent a lot of time reading the notices or even exchanged views about the situation they found themselves put into. However, the mainly silent encounters and especially the visitors who remained on the elevated platform, observing the activists from above, must have been so unsettling for the activists that they dubbed the space the “Human Zoo.”⁵ Whereas the Occupy Museums group, as part of the larger Occupy Movement, was active and known at that point, there seemed to have been a need for supplemental clarification of what exactly Occupy was doing in the Kunst-Werke. At the time I was there (for the notices, flyers, banners, and so on changed on a daily basis), one could read the following statement written on the wall beneath the activity schedule that the visitors were prone to study:



Fig. 9.5 Indignadx | Occupy at the 7th Berlin Biennale, 2012 (Photo: Marcin Kaliński)

Why are we at the Biennale?

1. Art is the act of visualizing, creating & sharing something new. We are creating a new way of organizing communities & of governing ourselves. We are involved [sic] in a communal, interactive, constantly evolving work of art.
2. When a new way of thinking about or representing a concept emerges in the world, artists use their work to introduce it to the public. It makes sense for activists & artists to work together in the same space.

Noticeably, the activists were looking for a legitimization of their presence “in the same space” as artists, by alluding to the spirit of the avant-garde and sharing the belief in the potential of creative opposition, let it be against or within the realm of art and politics.

While in this case the joint venture of artistic practices and political protest was set up by an institution, the opposite was true at the dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel, which took place in the same summer (June 9 to September 16, 2012). Here, at the beginning of July, Occupy activists proceeded with installing an uninvited camp in front of the main venue, the Fridericianum, a protest action that came to be known as dOCCUPY. There was a new quality to Occupy's presence during the huge art event the documenta typically is. In addition to the classical camp, the activists had realized a "real" art installation (initiated by the German architect Alexander Beck). In view in proximity to the occupiers' tents were 28 white tarps, in turn designed in the shape of tents, with each featuring a keyword of critiques of capitalism, for example, Greed, Envy, and Pride. These white tents were neatly arranged in rows and looked like an official, curated contribution to the documenta. In fact, probably most visitors never even realized that this art installation was clandestine (if tolerated) and a work of Artivism made by dOCCUPY.⁶

The Occupy Movement, as well as Occupy Museums, are still active, but public attention has somewhat shifted to new protest movements and their forms of Artivism, which shows that Artivism is closely linked to the comings and goings of social wrongs. On the one hand, there have been the scandals exposed by activists and whistleblowers such as Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden. Interestingly enough, artists from the art world have long been pointing to the risks of digital technologies and Big Data, and the consequential ramifications for our societies. For instance, in the field of the now much discussed surveillance technologies, the Surveillance Camera Players have been active since the 1990s, staging performances in front of surveillance cameras in order to expose the invasion of privacy. More recently, some net activists engage not only in what has come to be known as hacktivism, but also in net art, while others every so often collaborate with "classical" artists, such as Trevor Paglen, whose works of art visualize the ongoing mass data collection. "The supernerds," one stage director concerned with these issues goes so far as to say, "are the new avant-garde, which eventually should take over from us artists" (Richter 2014, 72—Translation D.D.). On the other hand, in 2015, the so-called European migrant crisis brought forth many a controversial art action which the public at large,

as well as art experts, found hard to deal with. For example, the performances staged by the German artist collective Zentrum für Politische Schönheit (“Center for Political Beauty”) clearly aim at shocking their audience and attracting attention. The question was (and still is): isn’t this kind of art instrumentalizing the situation of those it wishes to stand-up for? Then again: how could Artivism ever be “acceptable” for all? Again: it’s a conundrum.

Artivism Now, Part 2: The Arab Spring, Pussy Riot, and Ai Weiwei

The kind of Artivism discussed so far originates in Europe and North America, the “Western” hemisphere. However, Artivism is not confined to this part of the world, quite the contrary.⁷ The societal, cultural, economic, and above all political contexts are very different in non-“Western” parts of the world and call for separate consideration. In illiberal systems, undemocratic countries, or even dictatorial regimes, the significance of Artivism is enhanced. The status of activists is always unclear, but in these political systems, the ambiguity really cuts both ways, as it may either protect them from state reprisal or expose them to it. The following is a cursory excursion to places where Artivism is of ongoing relevance and where activists bring political issues to the fore.

During the Arab Spring, which, as I have pointed out earlier, inspired the Occupy Movement, the role of artists in the protests against the different state leaders and authorities was immense, thereby echoing the Prague Spring of 1968 and the so-called Velvet Revolution of 1989. Artists, poets, writers, musicians, actors, comedians, choreographers, filmmakers, bloggers, and many more took to the streets and contributed to the overthrow of their governments by claiming human rights and democracy, together with the rest of the protesting population. Unlike the previously state-sponsored art aimed at glorifying the nation and its leader, works of art now became key mediums of protest. The main exhibition and performance site for Artivism was the public space, meaning two spheres: the “real” and the “virtual” one. On the one hand, Street Art became very popular. Graffiti is quickly set up and has a high visibility;

graffiti artists have a chance of remaining anonymous. On the other hand, messages, images, and videos spread via social media played a crucial role in advancing the protests, reaching a large and young “audience” which was at the core of the Arab Spring (see the analysis provided by Castells 2012).

Activists and artists alike used the Internet for the kind of guerrilla communication Adbusters and hacktivists engage in, especially in the form of Internet memes. Memes are mostly funny pieces of media shared on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and so on, which have a fast-moving nature and can turn into veritable hypes. Very much in the sense of the *détournement*, they often consist of spoofs of existing pictures or some kind of footage. Arab Spring memes would satirize material featuring the respective state leader and his entourage, or material showing the drastic measures taken against protesters. Internet memes are a persistent phenomenon in the Arab countries (and in addition, also of Occupy), and in 2013, the “Harlem Shake” spread as a form of opposition against the newly rising Islamist powers there. The Harlem Shake was a sort of orchestrated and filmed flash mob, during which a group of people were first shown in their familiar surroundings, such as students at a university, sportsmen in the locker room, and soldiers in the field; then, there would be a cut in the video, and in the next shot, one could see the same group of people being dressed in funny costumes and dancing (or rather “shaking”) to Western music. The memes were posted as videos on YouTube and elsewhere. Originally and in most cases, the Harlem Shakes were meant as an online running joke, with worldwide groups competing for the best, that is, most absurd Harlem Shake. But primarily in Egypt and Tunisia, the performances were problematic, as they were considered indecent—and, for example, in Cairo, they led to the detention of students (which, in turn, provoked further Harlem Shakes). When a funny dance performance meets such violent reactions, it becomes political and turns into a means of political protest.

In the aftermath of another dance performance, similar, but not the same, consequences could be observed, as the “punk prayer” performed by Pussy Riot in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow on February 21, 2012 was intended as an act of political protest right from the start. The performance, a seemingly spontaneous, improvised sort of

concert, lasted less than a couple of minutes and consisted of a group of young women rushing up to the iconostasis and jumping to a punk song, singing (in Russian): “Mother of God, drive Putin away!”⁸ At one point, they would get on their knees and make the sign of the cross, before being led out of the cathedral by guards. These five women were part of the self-proclaimed feminist punk rock group Pussy Riot, which had started its activities in the run-up to the much disputed presidential elections in autumn 2011, once again restoring Vladimir Putin to the presidency in May 2012. Before the performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, members of Pussy Riot had realized similar punk prayers/concerts in other locations, such as the Red Square. The women are hardly identifiable but easily recognizable, for they always wear colorful trademark dresses, tights, and, first and foremost, balaclavas, which hide their faces, mimicking and honoring guerrilla fighters and precursors from the art world like the Guerrilla Girls, an equally anonymous group of women artists active since the mid-1980s, who deal with sexism and racism within the art world and typically wear gorilla masks. Pussy Riot also carry on the so-called Riot Grrrl punk rock movement of the early 1990s, which also addressed issues of sexism and patriarchy.

At first, Pussy Riot’s punk prayer/concert in the cathedral did not elicit much protest, except for the few irritated churchgoers who witnessed the performance. But by then, it was only half-done, as footage from the performance went into postproduction on the same day, which added the actually prefabricated song as a soundtrack to the edited video. The clip was posted on YouTube and elsewhere and quickly reached hundreds of thousands of viewers. At the beginning of March, the identified Pussy Riot members Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, and a little later Yekaterina Samutsevich, were arrested and brought before court for “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred.” For this very reason, they were convicted on August 17, 2012 and sentenced to two years’ imprisonment, with Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina indeed serving time in prison camps until December 23, 2013, when an amnesty was declared shortly before the end of their term. The arrest, the trial, and the verdict provoked a lot of protest: worldwide, politicians, artists, musicians, intellectuals, journalists, bloggers, and activists disagreed with the harsh actions undertaken against the young women, and, for a while, media

attention for the Pussy Riot case was huge. In the wake of the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement, with their respective kind of Artivism, Pussy Riot were not only on the “classical” news and on the agenda of the newspapers’ features sections, but were also a much discussed subject in art magazines.

In the process, the sympathy that most of the “Western public” had for Pussy Riot stood in striking contrast with the Russian public’s outrage and the scandal that their chosen location had caused. The cathedral might have been one among other locations where Pussy Riot had staged their protest, but in this case, their performance was aimed at the interrelations of church and state, which neither suited the officials nor the majority of the population. In fact, the rather dubious trial, in focusing on the act as a blasphemous parody of religious rituals instead of its critique of the corrupt, oligarchic, and repressive political system, had succeeded in depoliticizing their performance (see Prozorov 2014). Moreover, Pussy Riot’s self-ascription as artists in the form of a punk rock group, as well as their implications with the art world, did not serve as “camouflage” for their political message, which might have protected them from prosecution. On the contrary, Tolokonnikova’s and Samutsevich’s prior participation in the radical artist collective *Voina* (“War” in Russian), which had engaged in provocative, artistic–political performances since the late 2000s,⁹ probably reinforced their negative image among the largely conservative population (some actions and performances included sexual symbols and public sexual intercourse). Yet, at the same time, the political protest voiced by Pussy Riot by means of art has ongoing repercussions precisely in the art world, with works of art mainly dealing with their trial (such as Viktoria Lomasko’s drawings and Milo Rau’s theatrical reenactment). In a way, it seems like the art world has integrated Pussy Riot, all the while the group continues to stage unsanctioned political protest performances (e.g., during the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014).

This kind of integration in the art world can be highly problematic, as seen with the aforementioned exhibitions of protest camps in art institutions. It comes all the more naturally when the artist really is a recognized artist, as in the case of Ai Weiwei. Weiwei has been working as a contemporary artist for years and has come to fame with works being

shown in important, international art institutions and events such as the documenta in 2007. He has always been politically active as well, but, since 2008, there has been a new quality to his increasingly critical art projects, which repeatedly got him into difficulty with the Chinese authorities. In 2008, the Sichuan earthquake killed thousands of children attending so-called tofu-skin schools, inadequately constructed buildings which collapsed when the earthquake hit the region. While the Chinese government tried to conceal the surrounding circumstances of this tragedy, as well as the exact death toll, Weiwei and a large number of volunteers began investigating the names of all the victims, publishing their proceedings in a blog and thereby making their findings and the project public. Subsequently, the ever-growing list of names was (and is) being used to create works of art, such as installations, sculptures, and videos, which constantly attract attention in exhibition places around the world, for example, in Munich, Berlin, Venice, and London. Ever since, Weiwei has been prosecuted by the authorities, leading, at best, to the blocking of his blog and famous Twitter account, on which he used to document his daily routines, whereabouts, and projects in an attempt to seek protection by being closely monitored by a community of global followers.¹⁰ To some extent, this public self-display is related to Weiwei's experience of having been beaten by the police in 2009 and an illegitimate, months-long detention in 2011, during which, for a while, no one knew where he was.

In a country with no freedom of speech and press, artists such as Weiwei more and more frequently resort to the Internet and social media, which therefore once again play a crucial role in the making of Artivism. After his release in June 2011, Weiwei was not allowed to leave the country until July 2015, a time during which he still participated in a lot of exhibitions with the help of a network of people implementing his plans and ideas. In this way, exhibition visitors were confronted with Weiwei's works dealing with his detention, for instance, in the form of a reconstruction of his cell that visitors could enter and examine while being filmed by surveillance cameras (just like Weiwei at the time); other visitors could observe what the former were doing on a screen mounted outside of the reconstruction, creating an observational "loop." Other, earlier works took the form of video clips

that went viral on the Internet, such as Weiwei's own version of the popular song and dance *Gangnam Style* from 2012, in which he waves about with handcuffs (quickly removed by the authorities), or the hard rock music video *Dumbass* from 2013, in which his ever-present guards and he himself appear in a nightmarish, absurd scenario. Generally speaking, Ai Weiwei's works are very complex examples of Artivism, as they bring about political reactions, which in turn bring about more works of art. More recently, he has been concerned with the aforementioned migrant crisis. In striking contrast to most of the artistic-political practices discussed here, Ai Weiwei's works of art(ivism) are often translated into a "classical" aesthetic language, making use of wood, marble, precious stones, and so on. Between the Occupy Movement and the Arab Spring, and Pussy Riot and Ai Weiwei, the full range of Artivism comes into view.

Artivism in Opposition

One common thread of Artivism as described in this contribution is that the works and practices are "in opposition." But in opposition to what? So far, the opposition to a certain kind of political system, let it be one that does not grant equal opportunities for all or not even democracy and the freedom of speech, should have become explicit. Another, more implicit opposition underlying Artivism is the one to the "classical" art world, which, in large part, holds on to the idea of the artist as the sole and much admired author of clearly identifiable works of art, which, in one way or another, can be exhibited in art institutions or events. In other, less romanticizing words, this means that Artivism is hardly marketable. Artivists seldomly create commodifiable works, since their practice, as seen with Felshin's definition of Activist Art, is process oriented, temporal, collaborative, and, more often than not, site specific. This applies to many contemporary art forms that are not necessarily political, though. However, Artivism's opposition to economic thinking goes beyond the realm of art. Artivism is in opposition to the interrelation of capitalism, consumerism, and the persistent demand for societal utility, which is considered an inauspicious mixture.

This is rather obvious in the case of the Occupy Movement and Occupy Museums, given that the entire movement was set off by the financial crash of 2007–08, which has come to be interpreted as the negative culmination of an “unleashed” turbocapitalism. Paradoxically, the form of Artivism emerging in this context is in support of values such as autonomy, authenticity, creativity, innovation, and collaboration, which are also key concepts of the very economic system that many artists seek to attack or undermine. In their seminal study *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005), Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello show how these values and principles, such as project work, commitment, flexibility, and flat hierarchies, have found their way into the managerial language and literature since the 1980s and 1990s. In this manner, the contemporary capitalist system was able to co-opt ideas and practices from the realm of art and culture, and to integrate them into the realm of the market economy and the entrepreneurial society, entailing, among other things, increasingly precarious work. In a way, this process was a not-so-playful *détournement* realized the other way round, with the economic system “hijacking” artists’ ideas and practices and using them for its own goal.

Yet, this is an ongoing game, with artists of the 2000s, in turn, trying to bring down their opponents. The following statement was not made by an Occupy activist or artist, but by Pussy Riot’s Nadezhda Tolokonnikova in a letter to Slavoj Žižek, written during her imprisonment:

The anti-hierarchical structures and rhizomes of late capitalism are its successful ad campaign. [...] Modern capitalism seeks to assure us that it operates according to the principles of free creativity, endless development and diversity. It glosses over its other side in order to hide the reality that millions of people are enslaved by an all-powerful and fantastically stable norm of production. We want to reveal this lie. (Tolokonnikova and Žižek 2013)

The point at issue is whether Boltanski and Chiapello’s observation, that the so-called artistic critique and social critique of capitalism have gradually come apart in the course of the twentieth century, is still valid.¹¹ In one way or another, activist works and practices are aimed at both and engage in both. Chantal Mouffe actually openly calls for anticapitalist Artivism when she says: “What is needed is widening the field of artistic

intervention, by intervening directly in a multiplicity of social spaces in order to oppose the program of total social mobilization of capitalism” (Mouffe 2007, 1).

The lasting problem for activists is how this objective can be achieved despite the unforeseen consequences that some theorists and critics keep warning their audience of, considering how the intentions of activists and the outcome of their actions are not always congruent. “This has led some people to claim that art had lost its critical power because any form of critique is automatically recuperated and neutralized by capitalism” (ibid.). For example, in 2012, the *manager magazin*, which annually publishes the much discussed “Kunstkompass,” a ranking of the top 100 contemporary artists which was started in 1970, declared the “comeback of political art.” In the article, Ai Weiwei is celebrated for his swift rise to fame and positioned as a “protagonist of a movement” signaling “the comeback of an art that gets involved” (Rohr-Bongard 2012—Translation D.D.). The twisted logic of this appraisal is not only to recognize and honor activist art, but, by the same token, to also advertise it in the context of a business magazine and to an audience that includes not only art aficionados, but also art collectors, or rather art “investors.” The same persistent ambiguity can be discerned in the attention that Artivism attracts in the media and the art world, since, on the one hand, it can be very important and might even preserve the activists from overly severe prosecution, but, on the other hand, it is mostly short-lived, just like in the case of Pussy Riot. Still, the many risks that come with the ambiguity of Artivism are risks that activists are willing to take for the sake of what these artistic–political practices *can* achieve, much in the way of any kind of avant-garde that tries for something new.

Artivism itself, despite Peter Weibel’s and Boris Groys’ claims to the contrary, is not new per se. There is a long history and tradition of Artivism, which I could only hint at in this contribution. However, the attention activists have been able to draw in the past years is rather remarkable and has come to bring art institutions into the arena. Especially, curators seem to have a desire to embrace and incorporate “the zeitgeist symbolised by popular movements from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street” (Fowkes and Fowkes 2012). As a matter of fact, during the 56th Biennale di Venezia in 2015, the curator Okwui Enwezor set up a public space indeed called the “Arena” in the Central Pavilion in

the Giardini. The main program was a continuous live reading of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. *Das Kapital*, of all things! Is this a political statement in the context of an art event (to quote Żmijewski again, something that looks like art but isn't)? Is this an artistic performance, given that this *Oratorio* was directed by an artist, namely the British artist and filmmaker Isaac Julien (hence something that looks like a political message but actually isn't)? Is this deliberate irony (a kind of self-reflection on the art world's compliance with capitalism and consumerism)? And, to quote Felshin again, does it matter?

The least that can be said is that Artivism has us wonder, and will keep doing so by reminding us of the ever-present intricacies of the relationship between art and politics, art and economics, art and ethics, art and ...—insert here any sphere that art is supposed to be autonomous from.

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Notes

1. I will follow Peter Weibel here and write the term using a majuscule, much in the same way as any other art form mentioned in the text.
2. I have discussed the problematics of theories referring to works of art elsewhere (Danko 2011) and will not repeat my arguments here. I merely wish to point out that there is always a double effect at work: one of reducing the work of art to a simple illustration and one of elevating the work of art to the only source of original experience and innovative thoughts.

3. See online: <https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupy-wallstreet.html> (retrieved June 26, 2014).
4. A statement by the artist, a video, and photos of the performance, as well as of works of art originating from the performance, can be viewed on Throwell's home page: http://www.zefrey.com/project_wall_st.html (retrieved: June 26, 2014).
5. See the occupiers' report online: <http://occupymuseums.org/index.php/actions/43-occupy-museums-and-the-7th-berlin-biennale> (retrieved: June 26, 2014).
6. There is speculation about yet another Artist "twist" to dOCCUPY. Allegedly, the camp itself was inspired by a previous (and removed) clandestine art installation, once again in the form of a tent, by the artist Thierry Geoffroy (see Baden 2014).
7. Due to limitations of space, it is impossible to take into account all of the variety that Artivism presents worldwide. In particular, there is no mention of South American Artivism here. In this regard, I recommend Brian Holmes' writings (2009, 2012) about Activist Art, as he gives ample examples from this region.
8. See the full video on Pussy Riot's YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCasuaAczKY>. Accessed June 26, 2014.
9. Interestingly enough, some of the founding members of Voïna were part of the curatorial team around Artur Żmijewski for the Berlin Biennale in 2012.
10. Ai Weiwei's Twitter account is @aiww. His official home page, listing many of his projects, is <http://aiweiwei.com>
11. A more thorough analysis of Boltanski and Chiapello's study can be found in this book in the contribution by Dan Eugen Ratiu (Chap. 7).

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10

Dirty Pictures: Scandal and Censorship in Contemporary Art

Anne E. Bowler

Introduction

States and markets play a crucial role in art worlds, affecting artists, arts institutions, and the production, distribution, and reception of aesthetic objects and practices in numerous and often complicated ways. While the formal freedom of the artist and the ideology of liberal capitalism in the West have functioned to obscure these effects on a mundane, day-to-day basis, art controversies afford the opportunity to place the art–state–market nexus into sharp analytical relief. This chapter examines three contemporary art controversies as a means of assessing the condition of scandal and censorship in the context of the rise of neoliberalism in Western Europe and the United States.

Overt censorship of the arts has been a relatively rare occurrence in the West, more often associated with authoritarian political regimes

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(see, for example, Goldfarb 1982; Golomshtok 1990). But attempts to censor the arts are not unknown in democratic countries (see Bourdieu and Haacke 1995; Dubin 1992; Howells et al. 2012; Walker 1999). Nor are such conflicts a new phenomenon (see, for example, Beisel 1997). Scandal and transgression constituted an integral part of the self-definition of modern art and the modern artist. Romanticism cultivated an image of the artist as occupying an alienated position in society. The adversarial stance implicit in that conception would be elevated to the status of a maxim by subsequent Bohemian and avant-garde movements and doctrines. Early-twentieth-century avant-garde artists, who equated a revolution in aesthetic form with a revolution in social form, embraced revolutionary politics but often found themselves and their art in conflict with not only the status quo, which they openly rejected, but also various radical political movements whose ideals they ostensibly shared (Bürger 1984 [1974]).

The issue of censorship in the arts assumed a prominent position in the cultural politics of the later part of the twentieth century with the rise of what would come to be known as the “culture wars” in the United States. By the mid-1990s, as Steven J. Tepper has observed, more than a dozen books had been published on the “culture wars,” and while the use of the term has been the topic of debate, the arts figured significantly in the conflicts over cultural symbols that have been documented during this period (Tepper 2011, 7–37).¹ Exhibitions of work by the artists Andres Serrano in 1988 and Robert Mapplethorpe in 1989–90 became signal events in a series of disputes that led to attacks from conservative religious and political coalitions on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and public funding for the arts more generally (Dubin 1992; Kidd 2010). For the NEA, the main federal agency charged with public support of the arts in the United States, the impact has been enormous. The effects have included not only “a substantial reduction in federal aid to arts organizations” but also “the virtual elimination of federal grants made directly to artists” (Alexander 2005, 19, 38). New procedural restrictions have reduced agency autonomy in decision-making practices (Shockley and McNeely 2009). And the imposition of a “decency provision” has mandated that “general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs

and values of the American public” are taken into consideration as part of grant-giving guidelines (Dubin 1992, 266).

Although the example of the NEA is specific to the United States, it is instructive with respect to key issues and directions in the social control of the arts more broadly. Censorship, as Steven C. Dubin (1992, 9; 1999, 15) has noted, is a notoriously imprecise term that has been used to describe a broad span of policies, conditions, and practices. As a doctrine, neoliberalism emphasizes the primacy of the market, individual liberty, and minimal state intervention (Harvey 2005). Hence, neoliberal governments tend not to censor *directly* through outright bans on the production or distribution of artworks or the arrest and prosecution of artists (or other art world support personnel) but rather *indirectly* through the withdrawal of funding or use of selective forms of support. Moreover, the general decline in public funding for the arts, which has led to organizational restructuring and cultural policy changes informed by business management models, has facilitated the incursion of *both* state and commercial forms of control in the arts, which threaten the autonomy of arts organizations and artists alike (see Alexander 2011; Alexander and Bowler 2014, 8; Boorsma et al. 1998; Gray 2007; Häyrynen 2012). As Alexander (2005, 43) has stated, “In a sociology of art and the state, it is important to recognize that the state can encourage, restrict, or remain neutral to artistic expression, and that outright censorship is only one of a number of strategies it can employ.”²

The conceptual framework that guides the analysis of the three case studies that follows relies on a dual awareness of the complexity of art worlds and the fact that social control of the arts may not only take numerous forms but also emanate from different sources and social locations (Alexander and Rueschemeyer 2005; Dubin 1992; Tepper 2011). Censorious practices (or the threat of such) may be exercised by the state, market, art institutions and organizations such as museums and galleries, and among artists themselves in the form of self-censorship. Attention needs to be given to the different kinds of claims advanced by the producers and/or distributors of provocative art as well as by those who attempt to ban, marginalize, or otherwise interfere with controversial art. As Richard Howells (2012, 19) has observed, “controversies in the arts are frequently interesting but seldom disinterested.” Equally important is

attention to the contingency of outcomes that may result from both overt and covert efforts at social control of the arts, ranging from the selective support for different types of aesthetic expression to the suppression of specific kinds of artistic content. Censorship, as Dubin (1992, 9) has argued, is best understood as a social process.

Sensation

Although scandal has been a recurring feature of modern art, the controversy over the exhibit *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art (BMA) in 1999 is notable as a major cultural dispute of the late twentieth century. It commanded extensive international attention in both the popular press and scholarly publications. The exhibition provoked charges of indecency that reinvigorated debates over censorship and public funding of the arts in the United States from the previous decade, highlighting the vulnerability of arts institutions in the aftermath of the so-called culture wars. *Sensation* provided a stark illustration of the role of art as a symbolic tool in the hands of public officials attempting to create, augment, or solidify political capital. The commodification of the controversy that characterized the exhibition from its inception is revealing of the increased market pressures on arts institutions and organizations in the contemporary neoliberal climate. Finally, *Sensation* posed interesting questions about the meaning of offensive art in light of the sharp disjuncture between the allegations leveled against certain works in the exhibition by conservative politicians and religious leaders, and those by the broader museum-going public.

In September 1999, the then-New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani tried to prevent the opening of *Sensation* by threatening to withdraw city funds from the museum and terminate its lease.³ Characterizing works in the exhibition generally as “sick stuff” (Barry and Vogel 1999), one particular painting, *The Holy Virgin Mary* (1988), by the contemporary artist Chris Ofili, took center stage as the focal point of both Giuliani’s ire and the larger battle that ensued. The work is large, approximately 8 feet × 6 feet, composed of materials consisting of oil paint, paper collage, polyester

resin, glitter, map pins, and elephant dung on linen. A portrait of the Madonna, the painting depicts the figure of a Black woman against a vibrant yellow-gold background. She wears a blue robe, open on one side to reveal a breast made from a clump of dried, resin-coated elephant dung. Two additional masses of elephant dung support the painting at the base, pierced by pins that spell out “Virgin” on one side and “Mary” on the other. Small, collaged images surround the figure. From a distance, they appear to be butterflies or, as a number of critics noted, traditional *putti*. Closer inspection reveals them as cutout photographs of female genitalia and buttocks from pornographic magazines. While the gold background and flowing blue robe suggest the Renaissance tradition of religious portraiture, the collaged pieces and excrement incorporate elements of the profane.

Describing the work as “blasphemous,” “desecrating,” and an attack on Catholicism, Giuliani moved forward with penalties against the museum when, despite his objections, the exhibition opened as scheduled (Halle 2001, 141). As legal scholar David Strauss has observed, in doing so, Giuliani did not attempt to simply defund a painting or a single exhibition but took punitive, coercive action against an entire institution (Strauss 2001, 47). While the city did not directly fund *Sensation*, it provides the museum with funding for infrastructure expenses. The loss of that amount in 1999—approximately seven million dollars, nearly one-third of its annual budget—would have had severe consequences for the museum’s operation, while the threat of eviction, if successful, would have left the second-largest museum in New York, with a collection of more than 1.5 million objects, homeless (Barry and Vogel 1999; Dubin 1999, 247). Citing the action as a violation of its First Amendment rights, the museum sued the city and secured a preliminary injunction to restore funds (Halle 2001, 141). Although the injunction was hailed as a victory for the museum and artistic freedom more generally, experts on constitutional law have cautioned that the First Amendment is, as Halle notes, “not a reliable protection against government attempts to cut funding to the arts” (2001, 154; see also, Strauss 2001; Sunstein 2001). When an appeal filed by the city was subsequently dropped, museum officials expressed relief, knowing that the outcome of an extended legal battle remained uncertain (Halle 2001, 154).

State support of the arts in the United States is not guaranteed and the kind of extreme measures deployed by Giuliani in the *Sensation* case is only one of a number of tactics public officials may utilize as a form of social control in the cultural field (Alexander 2005 43; Halle 2001, 154–55; Strauss 2001, 50–51). At the same time, as Strauss points out, “there is a lesson to be drawn from the fact that Mayor Giuliani was so overt” (2001, 50). Symbolic crusades are never solely about the object or objects in question (see Beisel 1997; Dubin 1992; Tepper 2011). Singling out the Ofili painting as a form of “Catholic bashing” and “hate speech” gave Giuliani an opportunity to shore up political support from Catholics while retaining his pro-choice position on abortion, a critical issue as the then-Mayor began strategizing for political advantage over Hilary Clinton in an upcoming Senate race (Dubin 1999, 247, 261; Halle 2001, 149–50). Moral campaigns can also be effective tools in the dramaturgical displays that form a crucial component in the “politics of diversion,” and Giuliani’s “grandstanding” in the *Sensation* case, as Dubin (1999, 261) has noted, may have functioned to draw attention away from other pressing city problems, including a high poverty rate and racial tensions. Finally, conservative public officials may adopt an extreme stance on controversial art that has received government monies (either direct or indirect), knowing that while they may lose the fight in the short term, public support for arts funding may be eroded in the long run (Strauss 2001; Halle 2001, 143; Rothfield 2001a, 6). As Strauss argues, “controversies over art funding that will be easiest to win on First Amendment grounds – those in which the politicians’ attacks are particularly blatant – will be those in which the long-term damage to government support of art is likely to be greatest. Those are the cases in which politicians really see an opportunity to score points with public opinion” (Strauss 2001, 51). For officials such as Giuliani, a former prosecutor and Republican who crafted a political persona as a tough, no-nonsense champion of “decency” who would “clean up” New York, unconventional art and the institutions that defend it can be easy targets.

As Halle (2001, 147) aptly observed, “*Sensation* was an exhibition in search of a controversy.” Posters for the exhibition featured a tongue-in-cheek “health warning,” promising visitors the possibility of “shock, vomiting, confusion, panic, euphoria, and anxiety.”⁴ A half-page adver-

tisement in the *New York Times* published in the days preceding the closing of the show capitalized on the high-profile drama surrounding the exhibition with statements such as “The most radical, provocative and exciting artists working in Britain today” (quoted in Halle 2001, 146). Potential ticket-buyers were encouraged to call 1-87-SHARKBITE, a reference to another attention-grabbing work in the show, a tiger shark suspended in formaldehyde in a large glass-and-steel case by the contemporary artist Damien Hirst. The unabashedly titillating character of the marketing campaign for *Sensation* suggests a utilitarian calculation about the potential ability of scandal to generate ticket sales, boost attendance rates, and enhance museum visibility. While the “sensationalism” involved in *Sensation* provoked comments as a particularly blatant example of self-promotion, it is indicative of the increasing pressure on museums and other arts organizations to orient programming toward profitability (Cuno 2001; Rothfield 2001a, 5). Equally significant in this context was the pivotal role played by the advertising mogul and art market speculator Charles Saatchi, who was alleged to be using the exhibition and publicity to enhance the market value of his collection (Cuno 2001, 165–66; Halle 2001, 151–53; Rothfield 2001a, 3–6).

Neither Giuliani nor William A. Donohue, head of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, which organized a protest against *Sensation* outside the BMA, saw the exhibition. Rather, their reactions were elicited by a reporter for a local tabloid, whose article about the show included the erroneous description of the Ofili painting as “splattered” with elephant dung (Dubin 1999, 264–65; Halle 2001, 140). The elephant dung in the painting (a material used by Ofili in a number of works, not just *The Holy Virgin Mary*) became a central point of contention among Ofili’s detractors and advocates alike. But where the former saw an act of desecration, Ofili’s defenders insisted that for the artist, a practicing Catholic of Nigerian heritage, elephant dung represents fertility and regeneration, and that, in this light, the work could be interpreted as reverential. In all likelihood, the significance of the dung, as well as Ofili’s juxtaposition of the figure of the Madonna with pornographic cut-outs, is more complex (see Kimmelman 1999). But as Steven Dubin’s trenchant analyses of art censorship campaigns over several decades have shown, art works that become lightning rods for controversy are fre-

quently those that combine what are perceived to be naturally opposing categories (Dubin 1999, 1992). In doing so, they violate conventional symbolic boundaries in ways that moral entrepreneurs construct as threatening to the social order. Like Serrano's *Piss Christ*, Ofili's symbolic transgression consisted of merging the sacred with the profane. And more than one commentator suggested that at least part of the negative response to Ofili's Madonna may have had to do with issues of race and cultural hybridization: his Africanization of an icon that has traditionally been portrayed through an overwhelmingly white, Eurocentric lens (Rothenberg 2014, 179; Saltz 1999, 48).

Situated within the larger context of the exhibit as a whole, however, Ofili's painting was hardly the only work ripe for controversy in a show featuring approximately 90 paintings, sculptures, photographs, and installations by 42 artists from the Saatchi Collection (Brooklyn Museum of Art 1999). Indeed, an exit poll of 860 visitors to the exhibition at the BMA conducted by Halle and a team of colleagues found that an overwhelming majority of respondents reacted favorably to *The Holy Virgin Mary* (Halle 2001, 163; see, also, Halle et al. 2001). Another work that could easily be interpreted as antireligious, *Wrecked* (1996), a photographic portrait derivative of *The Last Supper*, by Sam Taylor-Wood, shows the artist, naked from the waist up with arms raised, at the center of a large banquet table surrounded by 12 drunk ("wrecked") friends. Yet, as Halle notes, "the two possibly anti-Catholic pieces – *The Holy Virgin Mary* and *Wrecked* – were *least* likely to cause offense among respondents. Over 80 percent of the surveyed audience found neither of these works 'at all offensive'" (Halle 2001, 168–69). Although some visitors voiced objections to a sculpture by the artist duo Jake and Dinos Chapman composed of mannequins of naked, genetically altered young girls and, to a lesser extent, installations by Hirst featuring a sliced-up pig and the head of a dead cow surrounded by live maggots and flies, 74% of respondents expressed views ranging from positive to very positive about the exhibition as a whole (Halle 2001, 157–59, 163–64).

These results reveal an important point about controversial art that speaks directly to contemporary debates about censorship: the contingent nature of meaning. Work deemed objectionable by one group may be assigned an entirely different interpretation by others. In the case of

the audience surveyed by Halle and his associates, even pieces that some respondents found offensive produced multiple interpretations (Halle 2001, 175). Meaning is also subject to context. While audiences self-select, that is, individuals predisposed to object to the contents of an exhibition are not likely to attend, a national survey conducted in the United States in 1999 found that 68% of respondents believe that the government should not be able to “ban art in public museums that contains content that might be offensive to others” (quoted in Halle 2001, 179; on the issue of self-selection, see Halle 2001, 155, 183). As Alexander (2003, 299) has observed, self-selection “suggests an important consideration in the debates over censorship: art placed inside private buildings like museums, even if they are open to the public, pose less of a danger than art shown in public settings.” Context is significant in another respect. Whereas controversy over the exhibition in Brooklyn overwhelmingly focused on Ofili and *The Holy Virgin Mary*, the source of contention in London, where the exhibit premiered, was a portrait of the British child killer Myra Hindley by the artist Marcus Harvey (Dubin 1999, 251–52; Howells 2012, 33–34; Walker 1999, 207–209). And while the exhibition’s stint in Berlin at the Hamburger Bahnhof, following London and prior to New York, generated high ticket sales, it did so without controversy altogether (Robecchi 2010).

Nude Men

Nude Men (Nackte Männer) opened in the autumn of 2012 at the Leopold Museum in Vienna. Conceived by museum curators as the complement to a highly successful 2006 exhibition that explored the history of the female image in art, *Nude Men from 1800 to the Present Day* featured approximately 300 works of art, including paintings, drawings, photography, and sculpture, by nearly 100 artists. Egyptian statuary, Greek vase painting, and works from the Renaissance highlighted the significance of the male nude in the history of art. But the bulk of the exhibition was devoted to developments of the past 200 years, ranging from academic painters such as William-Adolphe Bouguereau to the Viennese Expressionist Egon Schiele, for whom the

nude functioned as a radical examination of the self, to frank explorations of sexuality and gender identity by contemporary artists (Natter and Leopold 2012).

Controversy over *Nude Men* focused not on the content of the exhibition but rather on the promotional posters displayed throughout the city that advertised it. *Vive la France*, a 2006 photograph by the French artists Pierre Commy and Gilles Blanchard, shows three young, athletic men of different skin colors standing on a soccer field clad in nothing more than socks and cleats. As the image selected for the exhibition poster, it provoked a storm of angry complaints alleging indecency, obscenity, and pornography. Museum officials characterized the protests as emanating largely from strict Catholics and Muslims, as well as from parents who objected that the public display of explicit nudity posed a threat to children (Castile 2012; Cottrell 2012).⁵ While organizers expressed surprise at the magnitude of the protests, the potential for provocation was a factor from the start. Although images of nude or partially clothed men have increased in recent decades, especially in areas such as fashion advertising, female nudity continues to be far more prevalent. Indeed, one of the goals of the exhibit was to directly address the underrepresentation of the male nude or, as curator Tobias Natter eloquently phrased it in the press release issued by the museum, “the long shadow cast by the fig leaf” (Leopold Museum 2012). In response to the protests, the museum censored nearly 200 of the larger posters by placing bands of red paper strategically over the men’s genitalia. The color red, rich in symbolism, was not an incidental choice. As the museum spokesperson Klaus Pokorny told a reporter, “The color red is a signal. It says, ‘Here is something out of the ordinary’” (Cottrell 2012; see, also, Castile 2012).

Nude Men became a contemporary *succès de scandale*. The exhibit was reported among the museum’s most successful, with high attendance rates, an extended run, and media coverage in more than 60 countries. Together with a special exhibition of Gustav Klimt organized in honor of the famed Viennese artist’s 150th birthday, *Nude Men* helped to increase visitor numbers to the Leopold by 17% to more than 364,000 for 2012, including an increase in the number of young people visiting the museum.⁶ Originally scheduled to close at the end of January 2013, by the end of its extended run in March 2013, attendance figures for *Nude*

Men alone, which included works by Klimt, were estimated at 200,000.⁷ News accounts of the controversy were frequently characterized by a tone of bemusement: “Why does the male nude get no respect?” wrote a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* (Lane 2012). A story in the English-language monthly *The Vienna Review* opened with quotes from a string of puns the incident had inspired in the international press (Castile 2012). When the museum honored a request from a group of male visitors to tour the exhibit in the nude, media reports with discretely edited photos and video clips circulated widely, including extensive coverage on the Internet. In this context, the protests took on the appearance of an anachronistic backlash, out of step with contemporary Viennese society and inconsistent with the city’s storied past as a center of artistic greatness.

One noteworthy point of interest in the controversy surrounding *Nude Men* concerns the discrepancy in reactions to *Vive la France*, the work selected for the promotional posters, and another work, *Mr. Big*, a sculptural installation by the contemporary Austrian artist Ilse Haider placed at the entrance to the museum in the courtyard of the Museum’s Quartier for the duration of the exhibit. At more than 12-feet high, the digital photograph, mounted on a plywood frame, depicted a languidly reclining naked man. Although both works featured full-frontal nudity, the museum received no complaints about *Mr. Big*.⁸ The explanation for this marked difference lies in the argument developed by Halle in his analysis of the public reaction to *Sensation*, namely that artworks displayed within the bounded space of the museum or, in the case of *Mr. Big*, placed next to and part of the geography of the museum pose less of an affront than if they are shown in public spaces (Halle 2001, 144).

As the controversy over *Nude Men* demonstrates, male nudity poses a special problem in matters of representation. Historically, mastery of the male nude was considered a cornerstone of the academic training of an artist well into the nineteenth century. At the same time, the *display* of the male nude has been known to provoke negative reactions. This is not something new. In the case of *Nude Men*, curators and reporters alike commented on the incongruity of the protests directed at *Vive la France* in a city where images of female nudity seldom cause comment. This informal consensus is supported by findings from a study by the sociologist Beth Eck (2003), who found that although there are gender

differences in how men and women view the nude, the interpretation of male nudity is more complicated and poses greater difficulty than the female nude for respondents of both sexes (See also Bordo 1999). In another study, Eck (2001) demonstrated the importance of classificatory frames for interpreting nude images, suggesting the importance that contextual cues have for how people understand and react to representations of nudity. Would there have been fewer protests if the male figures in the promotional posters had been executed in neoclassical style as religious figures or mythological heroes, where the nudity was more reliably framed as “high art”? It is perhaps worthy of note here that for an exhibition of the male nude at the Musée d’Orsay inspired by the Leopold show, advertisements for the exhibit featured images of Mercury and Paris, Prince of Troy. In the former, by Pierre & Gilles, the same artist duo who created *Vive la France*, the figure is turned away from the viewer. The portrait of Paris, painted by Desmarais in 1787, depicts the young shepherd facing the viewer, his genitalia draped by a strip of gold ribbon.

The art of the nude, then, would appear to possess a particular complexity. However, the history of the Leopold Museum made it an ideal setting for a twenty-first-century controversy over nudity in art. Established as the Leopold Museum Private Foundation in 1994 with support from the Austrian government and the National Bank of Austria, the creation of the nonprofit foundation consolidated more than 5000 works of art amassed by the Viennese collectors Rudolf and Elisabeth Leopold. Opened to the public in 2001, the museum houses one of the largest collections of Austrian modern art, including what is considered to be the most significant compilation of works by Schiele, whose studies of the male and female nude were characterized as decadent and pornographic when first purchased by Rudolf Leopold in the mid-twentieth century. Thus, in selecting *Vive la France* for the exhibition’s promotional posters, curators Tobias Natter and Elisabeth Leopold can be seen as having acted within the boundaries of the museum’s institutional self-definition.⁹ As both *Sensation* and *Nude Men* illustrate, provocative exhibitions and the advertising campaigns that serve as the general public’s first introduction to them can be effective marketing strategies for art institutions seeking to expand their audience base, draw in new attend-

ees, and generate media coverage. The challenge that such strategies pose for institutional legitimacy is contingent upon a number of factors, both social and aesthetic.

The Virgin-Whore Church

In February 2008, an exhibition of work by the Finnish artist Ulla Karttunen entitled *Ecstatic Women: Holy Virgins of the Church and Porn* (*Ekstaattisia naisia: kirkon ja pornon pyhät neitsyet*) opened at the Kluuvi Gallery in Helsinki, an exhibition space administered by the Helsinki City Art Museum. Like much of Karttunen's oeuvre as a multimedia artist, curator, and writer, *Ecstatic Women* examined the dichotomization of the sacred and the sensual in Western culture, with a specific focus on the fetishization and commodification of the female image (Puncer 2011, 6; Karttunen 2011b). On the day following the opening, Finnish police seized images from *The Virgin-Whore Church* (*Neitsythuorakirkko*), an installation piece included as part of the exhibition. In the weeks that followed, Karttunen was charged with possession of indecent material, the installation was removed from the gallery under order of the director of the Helsinki City Art Museum, and personal belongings directly related to Karttunen's work as an artist were confiscated by police in a search of her home (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 22 May, 2008; Helsingin Sanomat International Edition 2008a, b; Voorhoof 2011).

The Virgin-Whore Church consisted of a tent whose floor was covered with images downloaded from open Internet pages depicting teenage girls in sexual poses and/or acts. Written texts featuring the artist's critique of the commercialization of adolescent female sexuality hung from barbed wire on the walls (Karttunen n.d.; Vänskä 2011, 45–46). Karttunen's use of unrestricted imagery from free websites was a deliberate strategy to draw attention to two interrelated points: (1) how readily available and easily accessible pornographic images of adolescents are on the Internet, and (2) the hypocrisy of a society which condemns the sexual abuse of children but where adolescent pornography constitutes a staple of the pornography industry. While the sites display claims that the young women represented in the photographs are of legal age (e.g.,

“barely 18 and 100% legal”), descriptive phrases such as “teen babes,” “virgin whores,” and “teen sluts” emphasize the youthfulness of the models. (The term “virgin whore” in the title of Karttunen’s work was taken from the sites.) More than 200 photographs were used in the installation. Images were selected to represent familiar conventions in pornography, ranging from simple nudity to rape scenes and other forms of sexual degradation (Karttunen 2011a, 41–42, 45; n.d.).

Karttunen’s writings emphasize the degree to which the objectification and hyper-sexualization of young women is not just confined to imagery found in pornography, but also a widespread feature of mainstream media. Pictures of partially clothed young women in sexually suggestive poses constitute a stock-in-trade component of advertising and merchandising campaigns for items, from cars and alcohol to clothing, accessories, and products targeted specifically at adolescents. Images of precocious sexuality are present in prime-time television programming and magazines, computer and video games, billboards, and posters. In Karttunen’s view, a “pornographic aesthetic” saturates contemporary mass culture and can be seen as the logical outcome of a market economy in which everything is for sale, and profit is the overriding goal. The metaphor of a church can be read as a statement about the cultural idealization of this aesthetic, while the placement of the photographs on the floor of the tent signified the manner in which the economic reality behind it, including the traffic in young bodies that forms the mainstay of the porn industry, is, in the words of the artist, routinely “bypassed and disregarded” (Karttunen 2011a, 41–42).

In May 2008, Karttunen was convicted by the Helsinki District Court for the possession and distribution of sexually obscene pictures depicting children under the age of 18. Sentencing guidelines set by Finnish law include penalties in the form of a fine or imprisonment for a maximum of one year (European Court of Human Rights 2010). Citing the fact that Karttunen had intended to promote public awareness about child pornography, the court declined to impose sanctions. However, Karttunen was barred from exhibiting a portion of the photographs for a period of 25 years (Sevänen n.d., 14). The Helsinki Court of Appeal subsequently upheld the conviction in March 2009. An application for appeal to the Finnish Supreme Court was denied in June 2009. A complaint filed by Karttunen in the European Court of Human Rights alleging that the

conviction constituted a violation of her freedom of expression as an artist was declared inadmissible in May 2011 (European Court of Human Rights 2010; Voorhoof 2011).

Although none of the images used by Karttunen were photographs of minors, Finnish law includes provisions prohibiting the possession and distribution of sexually explicit material featuring the *depiction* of a child in such instances where the age of the person in question cannot be determined (European Court of Human Rights 2010). Thus, *The Virgin-Whore Church* placed Karttunen in violation of a criminal code irrespective of the intentions behind the work.¹⁰ The disclaimers about age displayed on Internet pages, such as those from which Karttunen selected her source materials, are one of a number of strategies employed by the pornography industry to circumvent prohibitions against the use of minors. Yet, on a practical level, the implications are clear: the same images that flourish on open web pages available to anyone with Internet access were subjected to prosecution and censure when placed in a gallery as part of a work of art that was explicitly critical of adolescent pornography and the broader socioeconomic relations within which it is embedded. As Karttunen matter-of-factly stated, “The same Internet pages that became criminal in critical art are available in their entirety on the Internet” (Karttunen 2011a, 54, note 8).

The matter of differential treatment becomes especially problematic when comparing the case against Karttunen with an example involving cover art for an album by the German heavy metal band Scorpions. The original cover for *Virgin Killer*, first released in 1976, featured the photograph (by Michael von Gimbut) of a nude prepubescent girl, her genitalia partially obscured by the use of a shattered glass effect. The photo generated considerable controversy in a number of countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom; the album was later reissued with an alternate cover (Zips 2008). Erkki Sevänen, who has documented the events surrounding *The Virgin-Whore Church*, reports that a 2009 request to Finnish authorities by Karttunen calling for an investigation into the sale of the album with its original cover art was met with a written reply from the police stating that the cover of the record had not been published “in a pornographic context” and therefore would not be investigated.¹¹ The primacy of the market in this instance is remarkably

transparent. Adolescent sexuality as a commodity, whether in the form of cover art used to sell records or on the free pages of adult entertainment sites (where photos of young women serve as advertisements for other pictures that are offered for sale), is normalized as a routine function of the marketplace.

The issue of sanctions warrants analysis in this context. The fact that the court did not impose standard legal sanctions in the case against Karttunen implies that the artist was not punished. However, the court's ban against Karttunen's use of images from the installation has the effect of censoring the work *in toto*, thereby destroying *The Virgin-Whore Church* as a work of art. Appropriated directly from the Internet sites where they are the currency through which the online industry for adolescent pornography functions, the photographs—as empirical artifacts of that industry, referred to by the artist as “reality material”—were an integral component of the work and its communicative intent (Karttunen 2011a, 42; Vänskä 2011, 45–46). While the court could have mandated the use of warning labels and/or other disclaimers, the ban itself is akin to an extra-legal punishment that includes sanctions beyond what is specified by statute.

The ban on *The Virgin-Whore Church*, which became the central outcome of the court case against Karttunen, was in effect a reality even before the onset of the trial, when the work was dismantled and removed from the gallery by museum management immediately after the investigation began. This decision was a noteworthy departure from the institutional response to an exhibition of work by the American photographer Sally Mann at the Tennis Palace Art Museum in November 2007, just three months prior to the Karttunen opening. In both cases, police investigations were prompted by citizens' complaints about the subject matter contained in the exhibits. Like the Kluuvi Gallery, the Tennis Palace Art Museum is administered under the direction of the Helsinki City Art Museum. However, Mann's work, whose nude photographic portraits of her young children have generated controversy and accusations of child pornography by conservative cultural critics in the United States, remained on display (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 22 May, 2008; Helsingin Sanomat International Edition 2008a, b, c).

In the end, judgments about *The Virgin-Whore Church* among the broader public were, by necessity, largely based on the media accounts that circulated about it. Karttunen's case was the subject of considerable

publicity in Finland, with coverage spanning local and national newspapers, journals, radio, and television. Scandal-oriented accounts dominated the coverage, which focused on Karttunen's arrest and conviction for child pornography (Sevänen n.d., 15; Vänskä 2011). Information about the work of art in question tended to be minimal and reductive in character, with Karttunen portrayed as yet another artist provocateur that had placed obscene materials on gallery walls in the name of modern art. Notably missing from most accounts was a discussion of Karttunen's work as *social critique*—of the market for pornography, the widespread availability of “teen porn” on the Internet, and the commercialization of adolescent sexuality more generally.¹²

It was in this context that Karttunen was cast in the role of a folk devil at the center of a controversy fueled by sensational media stories that repetitiously linked the artist's name with child pornography. A concept developed by the sociologist Stanley Cohen (1980 [1972]) in his work on moral panics, the folk devil refers to a person or group labeled as deviant and stigmatized as a threat to social order. As in the case involving Karttunen, media typically play an important role in the creation of folk devils, cultivating an air of hysteria which functions to divert attention away from more complex social problems. Folk devils are often scapegoated in such situations. The stigmatization of Karttunen as a child pornographer led to virulent attacks against the artist on the Internet, where she was accused of sexual perversion and mental illness. A smaller but equally vocal group vilified Karttunen as a feminist, equating her criticism of the market for adolescent pornography with a hatred of men.¹³ Despite their divergent lines of attack, both camps sought to portray Karttunen in pathological terms. As Karttunen would later observe, “The case of the Virgin-Whore Church showed a paradoxical thing: criticism of [the] porn industry was taken as a sex crime” (2014, 10) (Figs. 10.1 and 10.2).

Karttunen's work is best understood as belonging to the tradition of socially critical art that ranges from early-twentieth-century avant-garde movements such as Dada to the Institutional Critique of the contemporary artist Hans Haacke. The underlying conceptual thread of *The Virgin-Whore Church* is concerned with the increasing organization of all spheres of life, including the aesthetic-cultural, by the instrumental logic of the market. It is ironic but perhaps not entirely shocking that the fate of that work would confirm this point.¹⁴

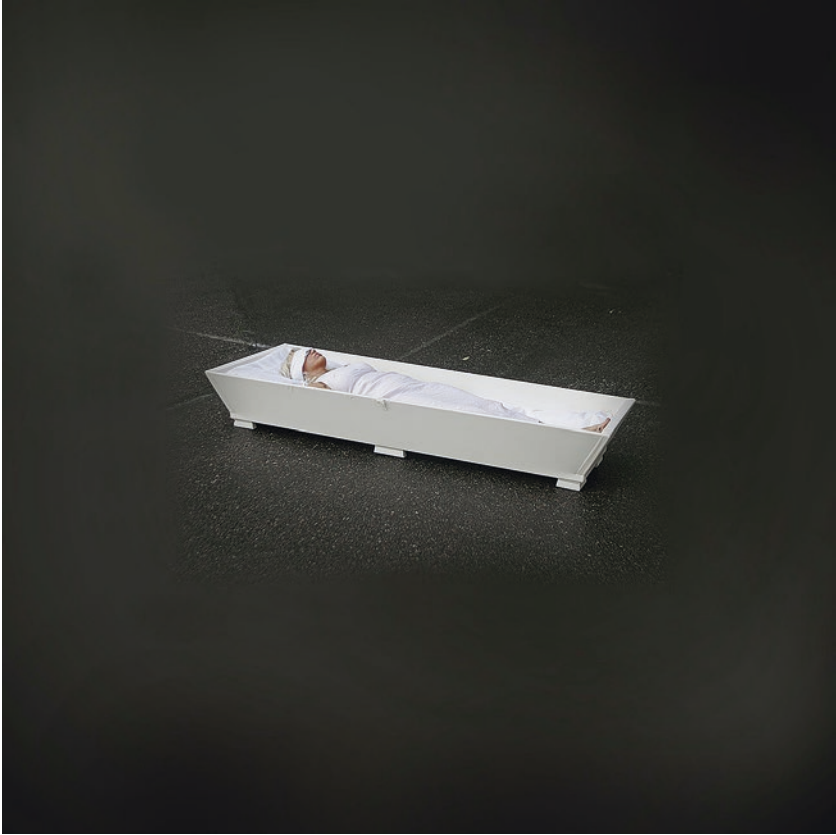


Fig. 10.1 Ulla Karttunen: *Stoning to Death*, performance, 2009. The work commented on neoliberal strategies to eliminate market-critical art

Conclusion

Four general themes emerge from these case studies that contribute to our understanding of the contemporary state of censorship and social control in the arts. *Censorship campaigns of the present tend to recapitulate censorship campaigns of the past.* Although a great deal has been written about postmodernism as having constituted a radical break from the modern, the analysis presented in this chapter shows that the core issues that have animated earlier social controversies in the arts continue to



Fig. 10.2 Ulla Karttunen: *Holy Market*, pigment print banner 200 cm × 150 cm, 2012, a part of the *Donna Criminale* project, which deals with the public reception of *The Virgin-Whore Church* (2008)

reappear in similar or modified forms: nudity and sexuality, symbolic pollution (art that violates conventional systems of classification), religion, and politics. The fact that these are enduring sources of contestation in the arts suggests that there is an underlying classificatory structure to aesthetic-cultural controversies.

The media play a central role in controversies over art. As Ari Adut (2008, 224–26) has observed, scandal requires not simply that a transgression has occurred but both publicity and a public. As the three case studies here illustrate, mass media coverage of controversy in the arts often assumes a reductive character, simplifying complex issues and forces into attention-grabbing, easily quotable sound bites. In doing so, media accounts may give shape to the public perception of a contested work that is radically different from the intention of the artist, as exemplified so dramatically in the case of Karttunen. However, the media can also be a strategic tool in the hands of the defenders of controversial art. A widely circulated quote from a Leopold Museum official, “[t]heir reaction is not a part of liberal thinking in the 21st century,” succinctly captured what appears to have been the more widespread sentiment about the protesters of the advertisements for *Nude Men*.¹⁵ To what degree this statement reflected or shaped public judgments is not clear, although it is likely that this type of institutional response has a greater chance of being effective in instances where the offending images are not “too offensive.” While the posters for the exhibition featured full-frontal male nudity, it is easy to imagine a similar statement backfiring had the museum chosen, for example, one of Mapplethorpe’s more controversial male nudes.¹⁶ Finally, while the role of the media in intensifying and sustaining art controversies is well known, *Sensation* posed a noteworthy case where the media played an active role in creating the conflict (Dubin 1999, 264; Halle 2001, 151). It has been documented that Giuliani had advance knowledge that the exhibition contained controversial material (Halle 2001, 147). It was not, however, until the inflammatory article describing the Ofili portrait as “splattered” with elephant dung that the battle over *Sensation* erupted (Dubin 1999, 264–65; Halle 2001, 148–51).

A third theme concerns *the hidden costs of neoliberalism in the arts*. The impact of economic restructuring and reduced public funding for the arts in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other advanced capitalist societies has placed increased pressure on arts institutions to adopt neo-

liberal models of management that define viability and success in market-based terms (Alexander 2011; Alexander and Bowler 2014; Belfiore 2012; Boorsma et al. 1998; Gray 2007; Häyrynen 2012). In practice, this means that artists, curators, administrators, and other arts professionals may exercise caution when it comes to producing work that has the potential for conflict. Alternately, it may result in a decision in favor of provocative art based on the oft-cited maxim that controversy sells. As Dubin (1999, 274) observes, “Scandalous art can pay the bills just as well as, and often better than, art that is pleasant and unobjectionable.” *Nude Men* and *Sensation*, both of which generated high attendance rates, are cases in point. However, even controversy that sells may come with a price, or, more accurately, prices. These can include immediate costs such as the threat of the withdrawal of funding and expensive legal battles. However, even when institutions such as the BMA are successful in fending off threats to funding cuts, they face the potential damage that campaigns against “offensive” art may weaken public perceptions of organizational integrity and legitimacy. As the Museum of Modern Art director Glenn Lowry stated, “Anytime museums come under the kind of scrutiny that occurred in Brooklyn, it inevitably frays the public trust that museums enjoy. This has consequences for all museums” (quoted in Rosenbaum 2000, 39). Less tangible and harder to measure is the impact of what became known as the “chilling effect” in the aftermath of the Mapplethorpe controversy, that is, the fear of prosecution, loss of funding, and other deleterious effects that lead to self-censorship among artists and art world professionals (see Kidd 2010, 76; Dubin 1999, 274).

Art controversies highlight the problem of meaning. Leaders of censorship campaigns attempt to construct the meaning of a work of art from a single negative symbol taken out of context where it is denied “the possibility of irony or multiple interpretations,” as anthropologist Carole Vance has observed (Vance 1989, 41; see also, Dubin 1999, 254). The choice of symbol is invariably strategic, selected on the basis of its ability to provoke outrage. Thus, *The Virgin-Whore Church* is reduced to child pornography, Ofili has desecrated a sacred icon with excrement, and the male nude is equated with obscenity. At the same time, advocates of censorship typically disavow censorship per se, insisting that what they are doing is simply protecting what are assumed to be universal (and uniformly defined) standards of “decency” and/or “beauty.” However, mean-

ing is not something that is easily determined or controlled, as illustrated by Halle's study of visitors' reactions to *Sensation* (Halle 2001; Halle et al. 2001). Additionally, moral advocates' efforts often fail by creating interest in the very objects they wish to suppress (Dubin 1999, 257). Finally, as Dustin Kidd (2012) has observed, conflicts about controversial art can function to promote democratic discourse and debate.

Meaning is important on another level in the context of this discussion. Contemporary theoretical debates on censorship have challenged traditional definitions that privilege regulative (*de jure*) censorship, with proponents of new conceptual models arguing that the full meaning of censorship cannot be adequately grasped without attention to the structural conditions that limit, restrict, and/or inhibit participation in the dissemination of ideas and other forms of communication, including aesthetic-cultural practices (see, for example, Jansen 1991, 221). While this line of argument, which emphasizes the significance of what is known as constituent or *de facto* censorship, is important for drawing attention to covert forms of discrimination and control in the arts and other social domains, it risks losing sight of the distinctiveness of overt exercises of repression.¹⁷ The example of Ulla Karttunen is a stark reminder of this very real threat to artistic freedom in the twenty-first century. As the case studies examined in this chapter illustrate, social control of the arts continues to take a variety of forms, including the exercise of state sanctions. The fallacy of neoliberalism lies in the assumption that the primacy of the market is a necessary and sufficient corollary of individual freedom and a noninterventionist state.

Notes

1. The "culture war" thesis is credited to James Davison Hunter (1991). Critics of the thesis have argued that the term presents a picture of conflict that is both overstated and simplistic in terms of a presumed binary split between two polarized ideological camps. A series of essays in an edited volume by Williams (1997), for example, argue that survey and ethnographic data indicate the existence of more complex divisions. See also Tepper (2011, 6–38).

2. Victoria D. Alexander, following Becker, has suggested the usefulness of an analytic distinction between repression and support, although, as Alexander and Rueschemeyer note, “the line between repression and selective support can be a thin one.” See Alexander (2005, 43), Alexander and Rueschemeyer (2005, 9), and Becker (1982, 180–91).
3. For all full account of the controversy, see the collected essays in Rothfield (2001b). See also Alexander (2003, 297–303), Halle (2001), and Dubin (1999, 246–75).
4. From the exhibition poster reproduced in Howells (2012, 28).
5. According to the museum spokesperson Klaus Pokorny, complaints on the basis of religious grounds came primarily from individuals rather than from representatives of organized groups. In addition to grievances issued directly to the museum, local police received complaints and a number of the posters were defaced (author’s correspondence, July 16, 2014). Tepper (2011, 41) has observed that charges of indecency, obscenity, and pornography have constituted a regular source of complaints in controversies over cultural objects throughout history; claims about works characterized as a threat to children, which begin to gain traction in the mid-nineteenth century, comprise a second source of protest.
6. “Vienna museum invites nudists to see ‘Naked Men,’” *Reuters*, January 29, 2013. Retrieved from <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/01/29/uk-art-austria-nudists-idUKLNE90S02420130129>. On media coverage in more than 60 countries, see “Naked men will move to Paris,” *Austrian Times*, February 25, 2013. Retrieved from http://www.austriantimes.at/news/Panorama/2013-02-25/47135/Naked_men_will_move_to_Paris
7. Author’s correspondence with the museum spokesperson Klaus Pokorny, July 16, 2014. In 1898, censors forced Klimt to amend a poster he created to promote the first exhibition of the Vienna Secessionists. Both the pre and postcensorship prints, depicting a nude Theseus, hung in the same room of the exhibit with Pierre & Gilles’ *Vive la France* (Natter and Leopold 2012; Castile 2012).
8. Author’s correspondence with the museum spokesperson Klaus Pokorny, July 16, 2014.
9. On the Leopold’s self-definition, see the narrative on the history of the collection at <http://www.leopoldmuseum.org/en/leopoldcollection/history>. For background information about the establishment of the museum, see <http://www.leopoldmuseum.org/en/leopoldcollection/privatefoundation>

10. In rendering its decision, the Court also cited the fact that because the faces of the models in the photographs were recognizable, the display constituted a violation of the right to privacy.
11. Author's correspondence with Erkki Sevänen. The phrase "in a pornographic context" is a direct quote taken from the police statement issued as a response to Karttunen's inquiry.
12. Sevänen notes that media reports that spoke of the critical element of Karttunen's work did in fact exist, but tended to be eclipsed by more sensational elements of the press.
13. Author's correspondence with Sevänen. On the repetitious linking of Karttunen's name with child pornography, see Karttunen (2011a, 49; 2014, 10).
14. See the analysis by Vänskä (2011), who also situates Karttunen's work within the transgressive practices of the historical avant-garde. It is worth noting a comparison here between the censorship of *The Virgin-Whore Church* and the cancellation of a solo exhibition of Hans Haacke at New York's Guggenheim Museum in 1971. For an excellent overview of the latter, see Danto (1987, 190–95).
15. Quote retrieved from <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/01/29/uk-art-austria-nudists-idUKLNE90S02420130129>
16. Social context is another important consideration here. Tepper's research (2011) highlights the impact of local community conditions on cultural conflicts, a finding that speaks of the differential geographic responses to *Sensation* as well.
17. Alexander (2005, 56–57, note 32) argues for the importance of an analytic distinction between overt censorship and covert forms of social control.

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Part 4

Afterword

11

Manifestations and Conditions of Art

Aleš Erjavec

Introduction

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a new neo-liberal order has emerged. Loosely defined, neo-liberalism as a political order privileges free trade and open markets, resulting in maximizing the role of the private sector in determining priorities and de-emphasizing the role of the public and the state's function in protecting and supporting them. (Thompson 2012, 29)

In this chapter, I intend to present the background of recent art and some of its theoretical articulations. Hopefully, such an approach will also reveal some aspects of the relationship between art and its broader setting. Thus, this chapter is meant to point out conditions of possibility for what is today increasingly designated as contemporary art.

My foremost point of reference will be art that strives to establish new timelines in a community and in the history of art or/and attempts to

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oppose and subvert the omnipresent current conditions which result in the continuation of the latest development of capitalism and cause omnipresent poverty on the one hand and a tiny but fabulously wealthy minority on the other. To the general global public, it seems that within such setting, art has so far not found an important role for itself. It appears that similarly to the immediacy of the economic sphere and its *laissez faire*, a chaotic situation reigns also in the sphere of art. If this applies to the European West, what can be then said of its East and South? In the latter, stagnation reigns, while in the former, the predominant situation remains life in a world in which hope has turned into despair, promise of a postcapitalist society into profit for others, while art seems to have mainly retained its function of entertainment. This is a first impression; traditional culture is still here, alternative art is still being created, and literature and visual art are still doing well and are being supported by private and, especially in Europe, state funding. Nevertheless, some things have changed.

One of the tasks of art (and of the humanities too) is to offer a mental map of some sort that aids us in “making sense” of the world. Contrary to the twentieth century and earlier times, today, there is neither Georg Lukács’ class consciousness nor have we attained Fredric Jameson’s cognitive mapping, but are, 30 years after the latter had been announced, still waiting for it to appear or be created. Also, the related schizophrenic split between the subject and the world is still there (see King 1996, 11–15). Even if these tasks have not been accomplished, art retains other functions. It is existentially important, for it often redistributes the sensible and expresses human subjectivity. Also, art matters because it usually “finds a way” to appear, to survive, to continue, and to turn into what it has not yet been. Just like ideologies and religions, art too still aids a community if not to survive, then to form and to exist in an existentially operative way.

The United States, Europe, and the Neoliberal Society

In her contribution to the first volume of this book, Vera L. Zolberg presents and discusses the history of state and private support of art in the United States and compares it with that in Europe. One difference that

she perceives between the two environments is that in the United States, in contradistinction to Europe, “a single official national cultural policy has been nonexistent, or, at most, barely discernible.” Another difference that she highlights is that in Europe, people expect the state to support culture, which is not the case in North America. Yet, Zolberg observes that, recently, this difference has diminished: “Indeed, it is not clear that French artists are much better off, but at least they know that there is a legitimacy to state support that still rarely exists in the United States.”

A related view is offered by Gregory Sholette, who argues that financial reductions in art and culture, so typical of contemporary neoliberalism, have first taken place “in New York City some thirty years ago [and have] proven pivotal for the evolution and the spread of neo-liberalism from Chicago to Budapest and Madrid” (Sholette 2007, 243), leading radical and experimental artists to develop their own ways of countering this latest transformation of capitalism.

Vera Zolberg notes that in the history of the United States, the “aesthetic sphere was always treated as private matter.” While sharing this view, Sholette notes a difference in the recent past in the stance of corporate America toward art. Initially, “[n]o matter how disingenuous in reality, private sponsorship of culture kept a reverential distance between the work of art and corporate self-promotion. . . . Over the past twenty years the world of fine art has shed its aura of autonomy – only to be reborn as an upscale brand name in its own right within the global entertainment economy” (Sholette 2007, 244). As in Sholette, my central point of reference will be fine and visual art.

In many respects, in their drive for expansion, for example, art and culture in general share the destiny of other commodities. Nevertheless, what has occurred recently is that most art, whether mainstream or avant-garde and radical, has (often gleefully) adjusted to the new circumstances in which Pierre Bourdieu’s two, formerly opposing and mutually excluding forms of capital (the financial and the symbolic) have paradoxically merged into a single entity, the essence of which is private support and art’s overt desire to be placed among the commodities and on the market. This gesture on the part of artists is complemented by the behavior of the public: art is no longer regarded primarily as a venue for the essence and truth of things and of the world, but as an investment, a form of entertainment, or an index of social standing. To prove this point, it suffices to compare

works by modern painters, such as Édouard Manet and Paul Cézanne (which after time became rather expensive too), or those by neo-avant-garde artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Donald Judd on the one hand, with works by Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons on the other.

The trends just described emerged with the advent of postmodernism as a historical period in which it became acceptable to collapse symbolic and financial capital, a consequence of this being the promotion of the concept and policy of culture industry. Conceived in the eighties, the concept at first spread haltingly and reluctantly across the European continent, but then, with the emergence of the economic crisis, it intensified its presence and started to aggressively penetrate and replace the more traditional, less marketable, and less competitive cultural environments, hence following the logic of global economic neoliberal capitalism.

Cultural and creative industries are a concept “which in the times of ‘Reagonomics’ and ‘Thatcherism’ replaced the doctrine of culture as a public good ... What is tragic is that the carriers of this concept are cultural workers themselves and that cultural lobbying is ready to ‘push all the buttons only so that it would work’ (a statement by the former British minister of Culture Chris Smith, one of the best-known mouthpieces of such ideas)” (Čopič 2013, 2). The concept and practice of “culture industry” have today spread to a similar extent as neoliberal capitalism and continue to expand. In this way, creative industries and their products fulfill a similar role as “mass culture” (later termed “culture industry”) described by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their 1947 study *Dialectics of Enlightenment*.

Claims made by Zolberg and Sholette should be complemented by Jameson’s observation from his classical work, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (published first in 1984), where he takes as his point of departure the notion of the “cultural dominant,” the logic of the latest such dominant being that which emerged in the United States and whose logic then spread across the globe: “[T]he development of cultural forms of postmodernism may be said to be the first specifically North American global style” (Jameson 1991, 4). The pivotal transformations that occurred mostly in the 1980s in culture and art (the blossoming of postmodernism) were intertwined with the simultaneously emerging economic neoliberalism.

The notion of the “art world” was created in the sixties and was related to the so-called institutional theory of art, both of which also answered the need to name certain phenomena art even though there was no reason (except for their placement in an exhibition space) to identify them as such. Today, “art world” could probably also be designated as a “community of art” which would (following Jacques Rancière) constitute a particular “community of sense.” Both the art world and the community of sense should really be designated in plural, for their number is infinite. The institutional theory of art, serving for a whole century as the leading factual theory of art, was related to the decline of modernity. It offered only a descriptive statement, proclaiming that a certain community (“world”) accepts certain works or phenomena as artworks and art phenomena. In this respect, my own endeavor in this chapter diverges from such a viewpoint, for I regard art to be more than a convention—in my opinion, art matters, although perhaps not for everybody, only under certain conditions, not to the same extent, and not with the same intensity.

“Art Finds a Way”

In the 1993 movie *Jurassic Park*, a group of visitors to Jurassic island discovers that dinosaur eggs have hatched in spite of scientists who are supervising the whole “Jurassic Park” venture having taken every precaution to prevent this from happening; henceforth, reproduction of dinosaurs is no longer in the care of human hands. The visiting scientist Dr. Ian Malcolm comments: “Life finds a way.”

May we claim that also art “finds a way”? In the last two decades, its present and future existence was perceived as questionable. A series of thinkers from different traditions who hardly shared philosophical views proclaimed art to be nearing its end. They ranged from Arthur Danto and Donald Kuspit to Jean Baudrillard, Yves Michaud, and Hans Belting, all arguing that art has encountered its demise and even death (Lang 1984). This period was not only that of modernism but, to all appearances, also the period of its ending, of its *Ausgang*, whether we call it postmodernism or contemporaneity. In those circumstances, Jameson pointed out

that while art may have already, with Hegel, encountered its end (or was reduced to historical insignificance), it arose one more time in the form of modernism before it underwent its final decline.

In the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, art, as such, not only was not questioned but simultaneously carried special significance—it revealed truth. In moral terms, capital was subordinated to art and beauty. In practically all thinkers analyzing and discussing art in the first half of the previous century, the latter was important and uncircumventable in relation to its human and subjective role and significance, for it revealed and gave access to the very essence of the human being, bringing together the “torn halves of man” with the help of beauty, which could overcome the separation between reason and the senses. Under modernism (from the middle of the nineteenth century up to the 1960s), art expressed truth, while under postmodernism, it created meaning. Since art was a privileged venue for truth, in Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, or Adorno, for example, art was valued for possessing a special significance in human society. With the rise of postmodernism, this feature has diminished, leading also to the belief that art is about to reach its final point of existence (and therefore its irrelevance).

One characteristic of art is that its concept “is located in a historically changing constellation of elements; it refuses definition. Its essence cannot be deduced from its origin as if the first works were a foundation on which everything that followed were constructed and would collapse if shaken” (Adorno 1997, 192). Even more: “The definition of art is at every point indicated by what art once was, but it is legitimated only by what it has become with regard to what it wants to, and perhaps can become” (Adorno 1997, 2–3). Art is characterized by an essence that always escapes definition: art transcends itself; it “finds a way” to come into existence, but this existence or appearance is never made visible or announced in advance (see Erjavec 2010).

Among the authors who already, in the seventies of the previous century, detected the emergence of postmodernism and identified it as the profound change that was reducing or even eliminating art’s hitherto special place and nature as regards the subject, society, and truth as they emerged and developed since romanticism was the British architectural critic Charles Jencks, who in 1977 named the emergent architecture

“postmodern.” Jencks also astutely observed that this new architecture meant “the end of avant-garde extremism, the partial return to tradition and the central role of communicating with the public, and architecture is the public art” (Jencks, 6). Architecture became the paradigmatic postmodern art, thereby replacing literature as the exemplary art form, best suited to express the essence of time and place. As such, architecture (and the related aestheticization of everyday life) was in no position to replace literature in the import it carried for human subjectivity, a result with grave consequences for the existential role of art.

Historical Perspectives

In the twentieth century, there was one theoretical tradition that criticized the omnipresence of market forces associated with various strands of capitalism. I am, of course, referring to the tradition of Marxism and Critical Theory, wherein opposing positions have been elaborated upon, for example, by Lukács and Adorno. Outside this frame of reference were the more traditionalist authors, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Roman Ingarden, and numerous others, mostly from the fifties, sixties, and seventies. While Lukács and Adorno saw in art primarily a social expression on the one hand and an existential entity on the other, in Merleau-Ponty and in Heidegger, just the opposite was true. In these instances, art was more than just art, with their view of it followed in the footsteps of romanticism, which “transcends the confines of literature and art and extends to all spheres of cultural and civil life” (Poggioli 1968, 18). This trend was complemented by “the rise of mass culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries [that] looks like the development of *national* cultural markets” (Denning 2004, 29–30). Within such a framework, the emergence and the rise of the early (1905–30) avant-gardes may have been unexpected, but no less forceful and pathbreaking. Many artistic avant-garde movements were, of course, also linked to political ones, which drastically changed their nature (see Erjavec 2015).

A substantial portion of art created and appreciated in the twentieth century was modernist art, which, in spite of its heterogeneous character, contained some common features. Within this modern framework and

supported and defended by cultural, historical, linguistic, and other borders existed the nation-state, its culture very much resembling “national culture” as it was two centuries ago, elaborated upon by J.G. Herder: my culture is what your culture is not and vice versa.

In the 1990s, the German philosopher Wolfgang Ivers (2004), in particular, promoted the idea of transculturality, the belief that in the oncoming future, it will be possible to avoid the former predominance of national cultures, a practice supported, promoted, and defended by all major national and international institutions and trends. The idea of transculturality designated also a departure from the modernist tradition, which has, by this time, become a plethora of different and also opposing discourses:

The word “international” may have been sapped of its semiotic energy, or co-opted in many ways by institutional forces in the course of time. But it proves to be an intriguingly productive term, one that invites erasure at the same time that it retains a desire for it. First, it posits an inherent relationality, a certain between-ness as opposed to, for instance, across-ness, as intimated by the rubric of the “transnational.” Second, it references one of the exemplary conditions of modernity that is the nation along with its apparatus, the nation-state, which the term “global” forecloses, or at least drastically diminishes. It is the nation, the time of its past and the geography of its boundaries, that oftentimes over determines the afterlife of the post-colony and secures for it the discourse and the aesthetic of representation. As Clifford Geertz once asked: What is a country if it is not a nation? What is a state if it is not sovereign? (Flores 2014, 175)

Under modernism, it was the national state that helped create national culture and that has also supported its institutions. The national, that is, ideological, state apparatuses, which include the national culture, obviously supported national economy and national identity, thereby proving that all these elements of the upper structure were of great import for the national state: without them, the national state would disintegrate into weak interrelated fragments. Yet, while the national state was essential for the creation and strengthening of the nation and a national culture, it is also true that class often played a role parallel to that of the nation. Let us take the cases of Italian Futurism around World War I and

Soviet Constructivism in the early 1920s; in both cases, a side-effect of national and class culture was the strengthening of the national state. Within the Soviet context, a specific situation of art vis-à-vis the market was created in the 1980s. I have in mind the works of the Russian painter Erik Bulatov, who argued that the East and the West were linked through an equivalence, namely the similarity between their specific markets, that of political propaganda and that of consumer products. While in the Soviet Union, there was an omnipresence of political and ideological propaganda, in the United States (as the paramount capitalist state), there was a plethora of commercial propaganda: images of McDonalds, Coca-Cola, and an infinite number of commercial brands (see Erjavec 2003, 28–29).

Between the 1960s and 1980s, postmodernism became the predominant cultural paradigm. Even if modernisms were “national,” they also aspired to be international, be it in architecture, experimental art, or the avant-garde movements. This paradox, internal dichotomy, and conflict intrinsic to individual strands of modernism were made visible in postmodernism as soon as it too revealed its essence and discarded its propagandistic statements: to openly become what it actually was—a lacunar form of modernism.

Some of the central values of modernism were authenticity, emancipation, subversion, truth, and, of course, Art with a capital “A.” In fine arts, they signified the modernist art of Adorno and Clement Greenberg; they also signified the predominance of the Word, namely Literature.

“Whatever Happened to Postmodernism?”

In the distant 1993, the American art critic and editor of *October* Hal Foster asked, to those from the former socialist countries, an unexpected and perplexing question: “Whatever happened to postmodernism?” “For me,” continued Foster, “as for many others, postmodernism signaled a need to break with the exhausted modernism, the dominant model of which focused on the formal values of art to the neglect not only of its historical determinations but also of its transformative possibilities” (Foster 1993, 3).

May we claim that Foster's thesis is universally valid? It is valid in some cultures and countries, and not in others. As with modernism in recent years, studies of postmodernism also revealed its internal differences, its division into numerous postmodernisms, and its specific features in relation to various parts of the globe. Since postmodernism started off as a grid of disparate constituent parts, its common denominators became visible only slowly. Nonetheless, soon, within such a changed landscape, both modernism and postmodernism have disintegrated into a plethora of parallel and mutually related discourses and works, making modernism more decentered and postmodernism more centered than they appeared previously.

In the former East Europe and some other countries that were for some time referred to as the "Second World," that is, countries that have, in the aftermath of 1989, left socialism behind, postmodernism in the nineties continued to be a viable, legitimate, desirable, and hegemonic art form, style, and cultural dominant that seemed to authentically respond to, reflect, and represent the ever-broader global and increasingly globalized situations in the post-1989 societies of the ex-socialist world. Changes occurring in these countries in the late eighties and early nineties are today regarded by many as their first step into the posthistorical era, but at the time, their inhabitants instead saw in them as a first step into a new historical epoch. This was not a consciousness of a "utopian" epoch, as many from the West thought and continue to think even today—the regional belief into such utopia dissipated at least a decade earlier—but the very historical hope that they were leaving the crumbling socialism behind and entering what then appeared to be a *postcapitalist* Western Europe.

Within such context, postmodern discourse and artistic practices possessed a positive meaning because the early encounters of Eastern European postsocialist art worlds with postmodernism and its subsequent local modifications were contacts with a postmodernism that easily incorporated and expressed an infinite number of features of the lived reality of individual postsocialist national communities. The predominant art in the former socialist countries was depoliticized modernist art that was created as "pure" art, even though it was not regarded as such by the authorities. In Western Europe and the United States, the situation

obviously differed, with formalist modernism, for some time, leading the way and postmodernism later partly replacing it as a cultural dominant. Simultaneously, the latter frequently also existed as a parallel to modernism. In cultural centers of ex-socialist countries, postmodernism became the dominant influence and analytical tool in the eighties and nineties, extending this position into our millennium, with “contemporary art” at that time slowly coming into sight. In Western Europe, the position of postmodernism differed: in the United Kingdom, it was almost a household word, while in France, hardly anyone used it.

Another reason for Eastern European enthusiasm for postmodernism lay in its development into a descriptive term denoting the ongoing artistic practices both in the West and in the former East. The assimilability of postmodern theories and artistic practices turned postmodernism into a pluralistic cultural and even political practice and theory. This view went hand in hand with the sudden rise in importance of both traditional and contemporary art and culture in Eastern European countries. A third reason was that in these countries, in the late eighties and in the nineties, art carried a special role, one very much resembling that of art and culture in earlier social and political upheavals of the region: just like in the previous century and a half, in events around 1989, culture once again became a national common denominator, connecting the national subjective past and future. The fourth reason was the ease with which the second term could be related to art and culture of the time, in which national cultures of different Eastern European countries unexpectedly discovered potentials for their cultures for a new use: national cultures of Eastern European countries found art to be an innovative and viable denominator, with its appreciation being shared by both Western and Eastern sides of Europe—a important link, especially in the brief but decisive period of Eastern Europe’s entry into the European Union (Erjavec 2014, 51–77). During this historic interval, art and culture were exhibited, promoted, and interpreted as authentic expressions of the ex-East, considered to be equal or surpassing the simultaneously created art from the West. The designation of “postmodernism” named well this new trend and substantially aided in its proliferation.

When today we examine the recent history and general cultural and even political relevance of modernism and postmodernism, we must take

into account their specifics in their particular environments. Postmodernism in many countries, even today, retains substantial relevance in intellectual and academic discourse, and is still considered a useful and reliable concept, with its referents to be found if not in today's art, then certainly in that of the previous three decades. In other words, Foster's 1993 claim regarding postmodernism is warranted when referring to First World postmodernism, but simply does not hold true for the former European socialist countries or China. Postmodernity is furthermore often still considered "the best available critical theory of global capital and its cultures in the contemporary world" (Smith 2008, 13).

Only when looking beyond the hegemonic forms of modernism and postmodernism are we able to discern a myriad of local modernisms and postmodernisms, all forming global cultural trends and currents, even if some of them appear or exist out of synchrony with their similes elsewhere in the world. In Eastern Europe, for example, postmodernism has retained its conceptual import for a long time and over a large territory, while elsewhere, it may already have become obsolete two decades ago.

As elsewhere in the world, and in spite of these observations in Western European as well as in the former socialist countries, postmodernism's role has recently been diminishing, not the least because, in the eyes of many, it has been transformed into an extension of modernism, thereby losing its distinctive and countermodernist character. Postmodernism's progressive fusion with modernism, as well as the slow and almost imperceptible narrowing of the gap that separated it from modernism, resulted in the present situation, wherein the two have coalesced to such an extent that the initial separation, on which postmodernism's identity and *raison d'être* were erected, has almost vanished.

The diminution and frequent subsequent disappearance of the gap between modernism and postmodernism caused a need for their replacement. As earlier mentioned, this had to do with the increase in the number of shared key features and their shared surroundings. Literature, for example, was an important ingredient of the art of modernism and of postmodernism, and possessed in Europe a special significance: here, the national identity was built on language, whose key manifestation was

literature. With the emergence of postmodernism, literature was becoming marginalized. Nonetheless, from our contemporary perspective, in postmodernism, it retained just enough significance to make us look through nostalgic eyes at the earlier intense debates about the postmodern literature of Umberto Eco, Thomas Pynchon, or the Serbian postmodern novelist Milorad Pavić. Today “art” predominantly entails works of visual art (which includes architecture) and not of the written word or music. Let me note in passing that, today, very few authors, Jacques Rancière is such an exception, refer in any significant measure to literature as an essential or relevant part of recent or contemporary art. It is at this stage that the notion of contemporaneity becomes relevant, although, at the beginning, only in a very simple way: “The root idea of the contemporary is to live, exist, or occur together ‘in’ time” (Osborne 2013, 22).

In the seventies, contemporary art for the first time gained a prominent place in art historical, critical, and theoretical discourses. While its emergence was supported by critics, curators, and artists, “contemporary art” acquired its relevance due to the need for a new concept and the proliferation of its proper logic, by spontaneously forming an equivalent of Fredric Jameson’s cultural dominant. This new and increasingly hegemonic position of contemporary art is visible in phenomena such as the “proliferation of contemporary art museums” (Bishop 2013, 16), in the fact that “the study of contemporary art has become the fastest-growing subject area in the academy since the turn of the millennium” (Bishop 2013, 16), as well as in the ongoing disappearance of postmodernism and modernism from quotidian and academic discourse. “New forms of art and spectatorship have crystallized in the past two decades. These new forms have come to be discursively constructed as ‘the contemporary’” (Alberro 2009, 60).

Under modernism, art was usually supported by the state, be it Western or socialist, with this support being often mirrored in the complementary monumental works ranging from sculptures by Henry Moore, for example, to the muralist painting of Diego Rivera. Before this happened, postmodernism started to emerge in China and Latin America (Erjavec 2003).

Terry Smith and Contemporary Art

It was Hans Belting who linked contemporary art to the emergence of global art. “*World art* is an old idea complementary to modernism, designating the art of the others because or although it was mostly to be found in Western museums. ... *Global art*, on the other hand, is recognized as the sudden and the worldwide production of art that did not exist or did not garner attention until the late 1980s. By its own definition *global art* is contemporary and, in spirit, postcolonial; thus, it is guided by the intention to replace the center and the periphery scheme of a hegemonic modernity and also claims freedom from the privilege of history” (Belting 2013, 178).

The other new concept relevant to the notion of contemporary art was posthistorical art introduced by Arthur Danto. For him, the defining trait of this new period was “the absence of direction”: “Recently people have begun to feel that the last twenty-five years, a period of tremendous experimental productiveness in the visual arts with no single narrative direction was the defining trait of the new period” (Danto 1997, 13). This new period is the contemporary, which is characterized by posthistorical art. “Anything ever done could be done today and be an example of post-historical art” (Danto 1997, 13). This also means that *in sensu stricto*, there no longer exists either distinguishable periods or distinct styles.

In what follows, I shall focus on contemporary art and will do this by discussing Terry Smith, the Australian-American art historian and theorist who not only diagnoses contemporary art as a cultural fact but also supports it: he perceives contemporary art as a notion that successfully corresponds to its referent, that is, names a specific art and its immediate setting (Smith 2006, 688). It is in his more recent publications that contemporary art and contemporaneity become Smith’s continuous preoccupations that he then also starts to connect in essential ways with their contextual framework; that is, he senses the need to complement his focus on art with an equal amount of attention paid to the broader political, economic, organizational, and institutional aspects of contemporary art. If some decades ago, dissemination, curating, art criticism, museum and gallery systems, the biennials, and, last but not least, the art market

were not of great theoretical concern, then today, the picture in this respect has visibly changed. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Smith, in accordance with his awareness that art system is increasing its presence and importance in different art worlds, recently also published a book on contemporary curating (Smith 2012), with the obvious aim to expound the system, network, or grid that loosely binds together these various segments of the current infinite number of art worlds. He also develops a typology with which he aims to theoretically conceptualize “contemporary art” and “contemporaneity.” Therefore, his intention is to reach beyond the confines set by the usual exclusive concern for contemporary art and to present “contemporaneity” as the extended or broadened realm or level of global society, very much resembling modernity in its relation to modernism or postmodernity in its relation to postmodernism: one denotes culture and art, and the other, global society.

Let me quote a long but telling passage from one of Smith’s essays in which he describes the main features of contemporary art; in this, pointing out of its resemblances with one side of the early, that is, nascent modernity described by Charles Baudelaire, Smith’s assessment of this new concept and its referent reads like a programmatic manifesto:

[A]n essential quality of contemporaneousness [is] its immediacy, its presentness, its instanteity, its prioritizing of the moment over the time, the instant over the epoch, of direct experience of multiplicitous complexity over the singular simplicity of distanced reflection. It is the pregnant present of the original meaning of “modern,” but without its subsequent contract with the future. It is the first, discomforting part of Baudelaire’s famous doublet, but bereft of the comfort of the second part. If we were to generalize this quality (of course, against its grain) as a key to world picturing, we would see its constituent features manifest there, to the virtual exclusion of other explanations. We would see, then, that *contemporaneity consists precisely in the acceleration, ubiquity and constancy of radical disjunctions of perception, of mismatching ways of seeing and valuing the same world, in the actual coincidence of asynchronous temporalities, in the jostling contingency of various cultural and social multiplicities, all thrown together in ways that highlight the fast-growing inequalities within and between them.* This description certainly looks like the world as it is now. No longer does it feel like “our time,” because “our” cannot stretch to encompass its contrariness.

Nor, indeed, is it “a time,” because if the modern was inclined above all to define itself as a period, and sort the past into periods, in contemporary conditions periodization is impossible. The only potentially permanent thing about this state of affairs is that it may last for an unspecifiable amount of time: the present may become, perversely, “eternal.” Not, however, in a state of wrought transfiguration, as Baudelaire had hoped, but as a kind of incessant incipience, of the kind theorized by Jacques Derrida as *à venir*—perpetual advent, that which is, while impossible to foresee or predict, always to come. (Smith 2008, 8–9)

In Smith’s case, the art he presents and discusses is explicitly “global,” meaning that it is no longer visibly attached to a certain environment or center. This signifies that within the contemporary setting, contemporary art is devoid of geographical determinations in the sense in which these were visible under modernist and also postmodernist conditions, when artists were tagged as appertaining to a certain nation or country, although, in fact, many among them functioned in some other environment. They may have been employing stylistic or thematic elements from their previous environment (their country of birth, for example) but their work was intended for their secondary (immigrant) cultural context. (Think of Turkish artists in Germany, of Arab in France, or Bosnian in Sweden, etc.) Yet, this was only the nascent stage of contemporaneity in art; in its developed stage, the dividing lines between the periphery and the center disappeared and borders vanished. Just as English is a national as well as an international language, contemporary art, while remaining partly national and arising from a fixed location, is also becoming simultaneously and necessarily global.

Smith’s project, presented so far in greatest detail in his 2009 book *What Is Contemporary Art?*, consists of an attempt to untangle the incessantly loose ends of contemporary art and to establish some common points and features in what appears to be a jumble of contradictory, excluding, or parallel works and events that apparently share only the designation as that of a museum, a gallery, a biennial, or some other artistic space/place/location. Their shared characteristics often have nothing to do with their shared locality but with their common, related, or similar concepts. In the early modernist past, as Zygmunt Bauman (1987) claimed in 1987, philosophers were “legislators.” Think, for example, of

Hegel's canonical role in determining our perception of past art, but in recent decades, they have turned into "interpreters."

Smith's position concerning contemporaneity could be condensed into the already mentioned predicates: acceleration, ubiquity, and constancy of radical disjunctures of perception, mismatching ways of seeing and valuing the same world, the actual coincidence of asynchronous temporalities, a contingency of various cultural and social multiplicities, all thrown together in ways that highlight the fast-growing inequalities within and between them.

In his more recent books, such as *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (2011), Smith argues that in contemporary art, a pattern exists between universal determination and random plurality. The pattern of which he speaks reminds us of set theory, which Alain Badiou posits in his main work, *Being and Event* (1988), as his ontology. The important feature of Smith's theory is that it limits the import of common features to a pattern that is based on resemblance and not on a causal relationship.

According to Smith, contemporary art consists of three main currents which form the mentioned pattern: the first is institutionalized Contemporary Art (which amounts to an aesthetic of globalization and is related to neoliberal economics and art institutions), while the second is a current that emerges from decolonization within the former colonial worlds and includes its impacts in the former First World. It is within this current, claims Smith, that postmodernism is to be located as a segment thereof. In Smith's view, postmodernism is a term too thin to denote this great change that is still continuing. He argues that postmodernism is today but a pointer to the first phase of contemporaneity. The third current consists of personal, small-scale, and modest offerings, and is the outcome of a generational change and the increased quantity of people actively participating in the image economy. Examples of the first current are Damien Hirst, Julian Schnabel, Jeff Koons, Gerhard Richter, and Takashi Murakami. The second current consists of artists such as Georges Adeagbo, William Kentridge, groups IRWIN and Laibach, the Critical Art Ensemble, and so on. The third current includes artists and groups such as Banksy, Daniel Joseph Martinez, Riviane Neuenschwander, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, the International Necronautical Society, and numerous other groups and artists.

Thus, the outcome of Smith's theory of contemporary art is that there is not one but three complementary answers to the question of what is contemporary art. There are, then, three interrelated kinds of contemporary art, the essence of which is raised on empirical grounds but which, nonetheless, consists of some broader philosophical characteristics.

Art is contemporary in an infinite number of ways, insists Smith, thereby discarding the master narratives such as modernity or postmodernism and offering an alternative that resembles Alain Badiou's argument about set theory, where there is no all-encompassing mathematical set. In Badiou, this truth carries universal proportions; that is, it is not only historically or geographically valid, but is instead, like Kant's epistemology, valid universally. Or, applied to art, we can say that since contemporary art is not only globally created and exhibited but also globally conceptualized—it is also universal.

Before I end this encounter with Terry Smith, let me quote again another major participant in the contemporaneity discussion, that is, Arthur Danto, for he points to a question that I have not yet raised: "It is characteristic of contemporaneity – but not of modernity – that it should have begun insidiously, without slogan or logo, without anyone being greatly aware that it had happened. ... Contemporary art ... has no brief against the art of the past, no sense that the past is something from which liberation must be won, no sense even that it is at all different as art from modern art generally" (Danto 1997, 5). Contrary to modernism and similarly to postmodernism (we could say that this is the postmodern "ingredient" in contemporary art), this art has no need to dissociate itself from the past.

Art Under Neoliberalism: Complicit, Critical, or ...?

Why is the issue of contemporary art relevant? First, because it comes closest to what appears to be the equivalent of a cultural dominant of our contemporaneity: it is, for better or worse, the "authentic" art of our present time, art that expresses and mirrors the essential and "true" characteristics of this epoch. What are they? Besides features enumerated and

described by Smith, they appear to be transculturalism (in the sense that contemporary art ignores national and other borders), the transgression of the entity of “work” (the latter is being replaced by installation, performance, documentation, etc.), and the attention being paid to the “micro-physics” of human, social, and political relations.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that this is also an art that is changing, just as the global political, economic, and cultural circumstances are, and that it is changing at an accelerated pace. Therefore, its nature and its identity are far from being firmly fixed. Instead, they are in a state of flux, a situation that is described well by Smith. It may be perhaps questionable whether we can claim, as Jameson did in the eighties of the previous century, that a certain art trend is a “cultural dominant” which “allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features” (Jameson 1991, 4), for, at the moment, contemporary art does not allow for a common denominator that would have clear contours and would allow for totalization in a similar way as modernism and even postmodernism (Belting 2013).

In her contribution to the first volume of this book, Nina Zahner from Germany observes that although financial cuts in the arts have hurt everybody, “[t]he independent scene suffered most, as short-term project funding decreased disproportionately.” This “open scene,” as she calls it, is at the same time the realm of experimentation. This art is also the most critical about society and its institutions, and is usually also the realm that is the most hermetic of all art production. Needless to say, it is this “open scene” that is also the most critical of the contemporary economic and social situation. A series of studies, by Claire Bishop (2012), Nato Thompson (2012), Belting (2013), Terry Smith (2009, 2012), and so on, has been documenting and promoting such an art. It is limited to certain art worlds or art communities, and it is on the cultural margin, noncommercial and frequently uncompromising, with its adherents often existing as movements or groups. For the most part, its creators will never attain the star status of recognized artists with large media coverage, and they also do not expect this. The very nature of their “works” prevents their commercial success. But does this suffice to call them subversive, critical, political, and so on? I would venture the hypothesis that it might, although they have and will

continue to have limited effect. With the plethora of media, information, and entertainment, every “work” has to compete for attention with a formidable number of other products of the image industries, be they traditional or entertainment works, which are, to such “works,” at the same time competitors and adversaries. The much discussed diminution of funding for art in recent decades affects mostly traditional institutions, such as museums, galleries, concert halls, and operas. When it comes to “alternative” art and that of the “open scene,” its authenticity and artistic strength are not essentially dependent upon state or private funding. If they are, their creators become government employees (as is the case in some European countries). Thus, I do not worry so much about the future of and support for “open scene” art, but I do about traditional art, for it continues to represent not only civilizational and cultural heritage but also the entry into the mentioned other, less institutional forms of art.

I have sketched the path that art of the last decades has taken, passing from modernism to postmodernism and modernisms, to end in contemporaneity, which consists of more than a simple continuation of the past. As Danto observed, and contrary to the appearance of modernism and postmodernism, it happened “without anyone being greatly aware that it had happened” (Danto 1997, 5). The importance of Danto, Belting, and Smith (whose theory I used to explain some of the characteristics of contemporary art) is that they have registered this newcomer, this new epoch and still new artistic entity of which we still cannot, as yet, say much, although its contours are fairly visible. In some countries, China, for example, this new concept was quickly assimilated, while in some others, with longer modernist traditions, it will require much time to attain broader acceptance. Thus, the triad of modernism, postmodernism, and contemporary art appears to form the current background of what we see, when discussing art, in the foreground. New market relations and the new status of art and culture reach and affect all of them. The problematic nature of neoliberal capitalism lies not so much in its reduction in funding for culture as in the general sense that, subjectively, art is no longer of the same relevance as it was in the past. We can always get money, but how do we know that we want to spend it on art?

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