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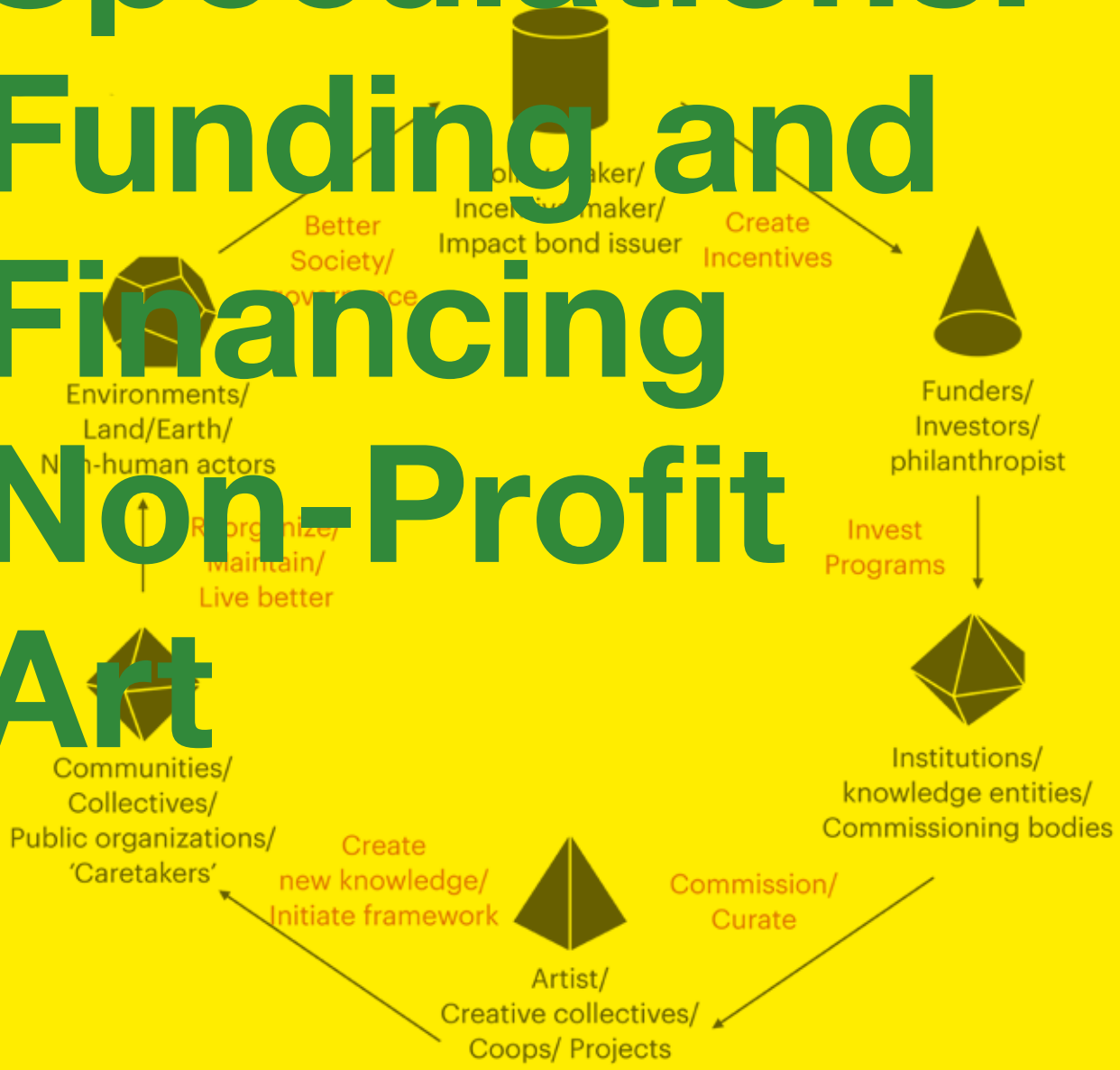
Speculations: Funding and Financing Non-Profit Art



Edited by Ronald Kolb, Shwetal A. Patel, Dorothee Richter

Contributions by Tanya Abraham, Laura Alexander, Bassam El Baroni, Poppy Bowers, Kathrin Böhm, Delphine Buysse, Elif Carrier, Antonio Cataldo, Aric Chen, Mame Farma Fall, Isabelle Graw, Alistair Hudson, Jan Jongert / Superuse, Carlijn Kingma, Renzo Martens, Kuba Szreder, Myriam Vandenbroucke, Marina Vishmidt, Mi You

Editorial
Speculations: Funding and Financing Non-Profit Art

This issue of OnCurating aims to shed light on the complex and often-times concealed economic basis of art production and exhibition-making. The contributions cover a range of issues from a highly speculative financial model of the art market, public funding mechanisms, and attempts of building alternative economic systems.

The compilation of texts are to be read in the context of two key problems related to arts funding. Firstly, the art market's speculative value creation favours singular artistic production of reification/objectification, emphasises the funding of singular artists, and reaffirms its own hegemonic structure in the light of an economic system of speculation that commodifies with the help of (public) funding bodies and the arts field at large. This form of art patronage does not necessarily need an interested public, and cynically can prosper in countries with big income gaps. Secondly, between the state-based public funding paradigms and their complicity or resistance to the reproduction of unequal relations and perpetuation of (neo-) colonial dichotomies through a centre-periphery model. In a post-Marxist reading, the centre-periphery dynamic is not just a historical (colonial, geopolitical) situation within nation states (urban-rural) or between "the West and the rest", but makes it clear that an unequal and exploitative relationship is created and maintained between the so-called underdeveloped countries and the rich states, where the elites of these nation states are also involved. At least in part, this also maintains the dependence on rich states and supports a globalised and accelerated financial capitalism in order to keep the dominant classes at the centre.

A possible countermovement seems to be gaining a certain economic independence through others, commonly shared financing models, and perhaps entering into an economy of sharing. What could the phrase "no commons without commoning" mean for the "freedom" of art and its relative autonomy? What kind of new dependencies does it create?

This issue came into being alongside the conference in June 2022 "Speculations on Funding", generously supported by ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) at CAMP Notes on Education, documenta Fifteen in Kassel, Germany. The aim of the conference convened with keynote inputs and contributions by Laura Alexander & Myriam Vandenbroucke (Prince Claus Fund), Syafiatudina Saja, farid rakun (ruangrupa), Antonio Cataldo, Isabelle Graw, Meron Mendel and Joshua Decter, to contribute to future funding policy frameworks, systems and approaches that are responsive to the complexity of a globally entangled art world. Whilst researching the topic in the aftermath of the conference in the context of documenta 15, we wanted to expand the viewpoints and invite a variety of perspectives to the debates that are raging in the field. Some contributions encompass theoretical explorations of the financial system of the art field, whilst many undertake a critique from a specific perspective, and others build a bridge directly to exhibition making by thematising the financial system itself.

Contributions:

The interview with Poppy Bowers, Kathrin Böhm & Kuba Szreder (Centre for Plausible Economies), and Alistair Hudson about the exhibition **"Economics the Blockbuster"** explicates how economic questions can not only be at the core of art production, but also became a topic for an exhibition itself. We discuss the group exhibition "that demonstrates art as real-world economic systems".

In **"From Speculation to Infrastructure: Material and Method in the Politics of Contemporary Art"** theorist Marina Vishmidt explores conditions of possibility, from formal, social, economic, historical and ontological perspectives, also its composition along the vectors of objective and subjective determination by race, class, gender and relation to the law.

Professor of Art and Economics at the University of Kassel / documenta Institut Mi You explores the social value of art in relation to new and historical materialism in **"Another Currency, Another Speculation: Reflections on Art and Economies Projects at documenta fifteen"**.

Bassam El Baroni explains 'cognitive provisionality' in **"Whither the Exhibition in the Age of Finance? Notes towards a Curatorial Practice of Leveraging"** in which he references the premodern world of irrational reckoning and risk taking, origins that he argues we can still discern in the world today.

The interview with Nieuwe Instituut's Aric Chen, Jan Jongert from Superuse and artist Carlijn Kingma, sheds light on the Dutch Pavilion exhibition at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2023, titled **"Plumbing the System"**. The project "represents the complex financial and regulatory systems that shape society" in Kingma's art works, and at the same time tries to implement ecological sustainable structures for the Dutch Pavilion, Venice Biennial, and the city of Venice.

Isabelle Graw analyses current tendencies toward 'resortization' in various segments of the art world in **"WELCOME TO THE RESORT: Six Theses on the Latest Structural Transformation of the Artistic Field and Its Consequences for Value Formation"**.

Tanya Abraham outlines challenges in funding for the arts in India, in particular her home state of Kerala where the Kochi-Muziris Biennale takes place. Her contribution **"Rethinking Funding for the Arts in India"** examines social conditions around contemporary art and its growing popularisation in India.

Delphine Buysse examines current and past cultural policy doctrines during independence movements in various African countries in **"Crossing Intersecting Trajectories and Funding Paradigm Shifts in the Cultural Sector: A Perspective from Dakar"**.

Elif Carrier exposes interconnected trends in **"Overpriced, Under-represented, Gate Guarded; The Last Ten Years of the Art Market"** which examines the commercialisation, globalisation and financialisation of art, forming new regimes of value in the art market.

Laura Alexander and Myriam Vandenbroucke propose more nuanced approaches to both the day-to-day and the long-term strategic work of funders in the arts, in their contribution **"Forces of Art: Monitoring and Evaluation as a Situated Knowledge-Making Practice"**.

Antonio Cataldo interweaves personal storytelling into formal essays for his contribution **"What Is Autonomy, and for Whom Is Autonomy?"**, partly inspired by his grandparents who found freedom through immense struggle and in the context of specific economic underpinnings.

Renzo Martens speaks to Shwetal A. Patel about his work in Africa, interest in community-based practices, particularly in Lusanga, Congo, and his concept of the white cube in relation to colonial restitution policies.

Shwetal A. Patel shares an extract from his doctoral research, in particular Winchester School of Art's week-long residency at Tate Exchange at Tate Modern museum in 2018. The residency included a one-day conference and workshop for the creation of a new guide 'How to Biennale! (The Manual)', which proposes a new set of critical tools for the field.

Economics the Blockbuster Interview with Poppy Bowers, Kathrin Böhm, and Kuba Szreder (Centre for Plausible Economies), and Alistair Hudson

by Ronald Kolb, Shwetal A. Patel, Dorothee Richter

Background

OnCurating (Ronald Kolb, Shwetal A. Patel, Dorothee Richter): Thank you for agreeing to this interview about your exhibition at the Whitworth in Manchester, in which you have all been involved in different roles. Let's start by exploring the project's origins. How did the project come about? What is the need for such a project that addresses economic structures in the art world today?

Poppy Bowers: I can start by framing how the Whitworth's programme has evolved over the last four years to seed this exhibition. The Whitworth was founded as an independent gallery in 1889 for the benefit and use of the people of Manchester. Recently, we've returned to this founding principle to ask how can this art gallery use art and artistic thinking to address urgent issues in people's lives and actively propose solutions?

We've underpinned this thinking with the concept of Arte Útil developed by Tania Bruguera. The concept enables us to think of the gallery and all its activities as a space to apply artistic thinking to a social problem; as Tania says, it has nothing to do with consumption, but with making something happen. So, a starting point was how can we use the event of an exhibition to rethink processes and working models to create a more equitable, diverse, and sustainable art ecology? This conversation is inseparable from ideas of economy, of course, and the economy had become an increasingly discussed topic in recent years, firstly with the impact of the Covid pandemic and then with the release of the mini budget. Some of our working questions were: What constitutes art? Aesthetic value or use value: can we use art as a tool for social and economic change? How can we learn from grassroots arts initiatives that seek to reinvent structures in our arts organisations and in our economic systems? Can art's use help us reconnect across our economic differences? How do pluralistic, constituent-led economies and art practices play out in certain contexts?

We started some of this work in 2019, so pre-pandemic, with an exhibition called *Joy for Ever* which was a response to John Ruskin's lectures in Manchester in 1857. Through that, we started to look at the public use of, and access to, collections and the use of our institutional spaces, and the public and private networks and ecosystems in which art circulates. As a part of the university, we have access to an international business school as well as a vibrant political economy department. *Economics the Blockbuster* started, following on from *Joy for Ever*, as a series of workshops with staff from across all departments, artists, economic thinkers, and business professors, as we determined together what this next exhibition should do, how it should operate, and what knowledges and provocations it should bring into play. Kathrin and Kuba were early on part of that conversation.

Kathrin Böhm: The idea of exploring economic practice within art practice and at the same time reading art through its economic structure was something we all shared from the beginning. It is not only about how we can make the diverse economy of the museum and the exhibition visible—including monetary and non-monetary contributions, but also about how we can present art-based projects as economic propositions and possibilities. And thus to give an art audience the possibility to understand art as an economic practice, not on a symbolic level, but on an actual and practical level. It's about showing these two things together: exhibition-making as an economic practice and art as an economic practice.

Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) and Renzo Martens, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023. Photo credit: Michael Pollard

The Alternative School of Economics, *The Neoliberal Imagination*, 2023, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023. Photo credit: Michael Pollard

Goldin+Senneby, *Quantitative Melencolia*, 2023. Commissioned by the Whitworth, The University of Manchester. Photo credit: Michael Pollard.

lumbung Kios, *lumbung Kios & Friends*, 2023, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023. Photo credit: Michael Pollard

Rosalie Schweiker, *Collection Zine*, 2023, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023.
Photo credit: Michael Pollard

Owen Griffiths and Alessandra Saviotti, *Tablecloth as Toolkit – Manchester Version.* 2023, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023. Photo credit: David Oates

Kuba Szreder: Our collaboration on this project started with the *Center for Plausible Economies*, which Kathrin and I convened in 2018 in London. Within this framework, we organised a series of redrawing workshops with invited artists that essentially focussed on visualising economies. On the one hand, we worked on diagrammatic representations of people's economies, identifying actors, connections between them, and relationships in the larger network in which they operate. On the other hand, these redrawings used artistic means (and a freedom to engage with the materials that artistic license provides) to identify the economic foundations of artistic practice. Rosalie Schweiker, for example, drew a series of comics about the London art world. She shows how artists operate in this extremely competitive economy.

Arte Útil was also part of this project in 2018. Alistair spoke then about economic strategies of acquisition for Arte Útil's archives and the desire to invent new schemes, about how collecting can be a practice of the commons, or how collecting can build commons to avoid sole ownership or possession by an institution. In this context, appropriation is replaced by custodianship, an archival practice that has more to do with usership and spectatorship, that is, with use rather than mere exhibition. This scheme was mapped by Alistair together with John Byrne. Possibly as a result, we began to discuss how the *Centre for Plausible Economies* could contribute to the *Blockbuster* exhibition.

Alistair Hudson: In terms of the background of the exhibition, the motivation was about doing something in relation to the way the economy itself has become such a major issue for all of us now. It is always important to me that our cultural institutions are relevant and take on the big themes of our times. In some ways, it is amusing how economics has migrated from being a humanities subject to a quasi-science and now a narrative that is so central to decision making in the world. A sort of fiction that drives everything. Yet, at the same time I wanted to go back to the broad idea of economics and an operating system for society, or even the planet now, not just a monetary system.

That was the founding idea, especially after the financial crash of 2008 and after various global disasters. Everything kept coming back to the economy and the inability of anyone to find another way to run the world other than the one constructed in 19th-century Europe. And it was particularly important to address this in Manchester, where capitalism as we know it began. As Poppy said, ETB is linked to the *Joy for Ever* exhibition we showed at the beginning of my term, which was based on Ruskin's lecture on political economy at the Royal Manchester Institution (now Manchester Art Gallery) in 1857. The lecture was a two-part, six-hour tirade to all industrialists and capitalists about how they got it all wrong and how they should ensure the housekeeping of society be done more artfully and effectively, and how the role of art could be used more in the service of society, rather than baubles on walls. Basically, he called for a change in the economy, i.e., a change in the way the operating system works. The proposal of *Joy for Ever* was to take Ruskin's lecture and make it go in a rather wayward way, with artworks as illustrations to a scenographic lecture of words and pictures.

Economics the Blockbuster was then conceived as part two of a trilogy, in which artists use their artistic competence to influence or create new parallel economies that give us a different way or way of doing things in the world. I wanted the economics of the exhibition to be part of the project, too, so that everything was part of, or contributing to, an economic system. The title was, of course, poking fun at the way that museums have become dependent on the blockbuster model to drive income and footfall, yet in this case to try and do it with a subject that was the least conducive to the model. I believe the Hayward Gallery did a show on economics back in the '70s, and it was on record as their least popular show ever! In line with the way the programme was developing and in relation to the concepts of Arte Útil and the Useful Museum, we also wanted the project to be operational, not just representational. That is, the projects featured should be actually operating in the world economically, not just pointing at facts, figures, and phenomena. Energetics, rather than semiotics. The exhibition should get its hands dirty in the cut and thrust of the world, with products and sales, NFTs and Blockchain, trade and commerce and exchange taking place through the gallery—it should actually make money to shed light on the reality of our system. It also should be educational in the broadest sense, and with Ismail Ertürk on board, we could bring in the Manchester Business School as a collaborator, with projects developed together that would offer new insights into that world which seems so far away from being 'just art'.

Dorothee Richter: About the collaborative moment in the project… You mentioned John Ruskin, did you also read him together, or how should I imagine you worked on this? Have you also read other economists?

Centre for Plausible Economies, *Redrawing the Economy*, 2023, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023. Photo credit: David Oates

PB: Yes, collective reading has been an important form of collaboration. To go back to Ruskin, I organised fortnightly group readings of the four parts of John Ruskin's economic essays on the lead-up to the *Joy for Ever* exhibition. The reading groups were led by John Byrne and me and took place mid-mornings, in one of our open-plan gallery spaces at the Whitworth, amongst our collection displays. They were free for staff and members of the public to join; some came as an intended visit, others dropped in as they encountered us in the space on the day. It was a generous, slow reading and discussion of Ruskin's essays with the idea of applying his provocations to the conditions in which we were working. We continued these readings in the central space of the *Joy for Ever* exhibition after it opened. As Alistair mentions, an intention was to apply these ideas to the daily work of the gallery, to enable them to seep into its daily processes and infrastructures. It became clear that we could no longer just present such ideas as examples from elsewhere. We needed to enact them in a way that generated operational change. This mindset and reading activity very much set the ground for *Economics the Blockbuster*, which was about adopting this collaborative and active methodology to a fuller extent. As part of this, we created an online platform with Liverpool John Moores University called *decentralising political economies*, www.dpe.tools, where collective reading extended to Zoom chats, a library of articles, and some practical toolkits as well as an online symposium six months ahead of the exhibition opening.

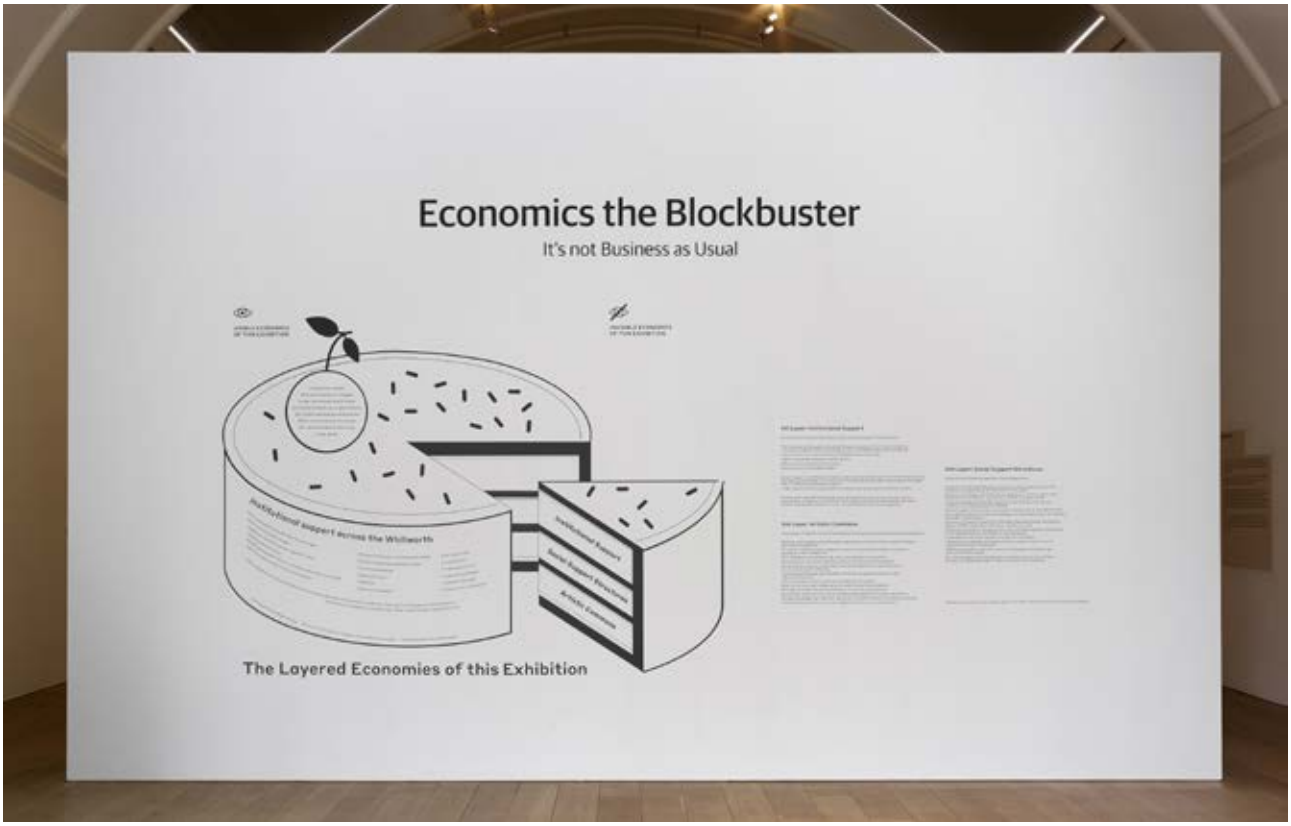
KB: I think an important aspect is the correlation between image production and our lived economic reality. This idea of drawing, redrawing, and making connections between images we know as important economic signs and how they influence our economic imagination has become key to all thinking and our collective method. And this "redrawing the economy" as a call to action comes from JK Gibson-Graham's influential *Community Economies Institute*, with its core idea that we all identify as economic subjects. And a simple, low-tech, and accessible way to do this is to draw and redraw.

KS: What informed our research process was definitely JK Gibson-Graham's feminist deconstruction of the economies and their dominant capitalocentric visions. Actually, both visions are enmeshed in specific imagery. Katherine Gibson's image of the economic iceberg was with us from the very beginning, central to our discussions about how economies work. In short, in today's economic terms, it means that the capitalist, monetary economies, based on hegemonic notions of commodity markets, wage labour, and capitalist enterprise, are only the tip of the iceberg. But the far greater part of economic life consists of women's care work, of the unpaid exchange of common goods, of gifts, of all the trust-based social economies without which capitalist accumulation would not have been possible. JK Gibson-Graham's argument is that one can reclaim this complexity and richness of economic life by mapping it. According to this feminist understanding of economics, something that is rendered economically invisible becomes a resource that can be easily exploited. If something is not accounted for, it can just be taken for free, right? As with "free labour", of course, it is not free, but unpaid. All these things that are part of the economic operation, but not accounted for as part of the equation, become externalities. For example, the environmental or social costs of economic operations are often unregistered and accumulate over time, as hidden costs, while underpinning private profits. These are arguments that have underpinned the idea of reframing economics in the exhibition project *Economics the Blockbuster* from the very beginning.

Artistic Practices with Economic Models

Ronald Kolb: How did these considerations ultimately translate into the exhibition? We can find a wall text with a pie chart describing the funding of this very exhibition. Can you talk about this and other insertions of artistic practices into economic models?

KS: This diagram is a good example of this deconstructionist idea of how to imagine the economy. Let's say the economic spectacle is dominated by the images of money or budgets.... One always imagines who spent what, how much money was given to whom...that is, of course, a very important aspect. But many transactions take place outside the figures of a budget. The pie diagram results from our efforts to visualise the diversity of what constitutes diverse economies of exhibition making. We were inspired by the image created by the feminist economist Hazel Henderson in the early 1980s, who imagined the industrial economic system as a three-layered cake with icing on top of it. Her argument is that financial economy is just the icing on a cake. The layer below the icing stands for state enterprises, the middle layer is constituted by social economies, and the bottom layer by ecological or natural ecosystems. The punchline here is that you cannot imagine capitalism or any kind of finance-based economy without actually taking into



Economics the Blockbuster: It's not Business as Usual, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023. Diagram design by Textbook Studio. Photo credit: Michael Pollard

account all these other layers as well. We used this as a leading image to understand the economies of the *Economics the Blockbuster* exhibition. It is a bit tongue-in-cheek, but we imagined the very exhibition—what you can see in the exhibition spaces—to be just a cherry on top of the cake. This "cherry" is sweet and appealing, we all love to see the artworks, meet the artists, and so on. But this "cherry" does not hover in a vacuum, it sits on top of an economic cake. It rests on the "icing", a layer that symbolises the financial economies of the exhibition. Then the top layer of the cake is constituted by institutional partners and the museum as such. The middle layers are social networks and trust-based, collective economies that contribute to the exhibition, without which no exhibition could actually take place. And the bottom is constituted by what we call the artistic commons. All the repositories of ideas, styles, references, databases, or languages that we constantly source in order to create any kind of artistic expression.

PB: The architecture of the Whitworth enables you to have two entrances into the exhibition, one at either end of a central gallery space. At one entrance was the *economy of the exhibition as a cake* diagram that Kuba just described, and at the other entrance of the exhibition, there was a hand-drawn map naming all the people involved in the exhibition. It included the artists and collectives on display, of course, but also the different people and organisations that contributed to the activities or presentations in the exhibition. It also included their partners and the companies that helped produce some of the works. It was a kind of portrait of the relationships and forms of cooperation that not only enable the exhibition to form but are, arguably, the actual material of the exhibition itself.

KB: I think this double-sided wall is spot on, explaining that organisations can perpetuate negative, harmful economic systems or try to create different structures. The Whitworth in Manchester, as a constituent museum that actively and explicitly aims to reorganise relationships—including economic relations—is a perfect place to do this. I think we have to remember that each project in the exhibition has taken the freedom to be its own organisational structure through which to implement a different economy. As artists, we are often shown in an exhibition where our ideas about different economies are presented, but we have little influence to change the economic realities of the organisations—this is why we invited, for example, Lumbung Kiosk, a pro-

ject that came out of lumbung from *documenta fifteen*. I want to emphasise that "lumbung" was also an economic proposal to reorganise one of the biggest art events in the world. It was the idea of a community economy based on solidarity, collective resource sharing, and instigating a sustainable art economy away from the market. Continuing the practice of lumbung and its economic principles and economic ethics was important for the exhibition.

DR: A lot of the ideas were very important at documenta in my view, but they were also devaluated because of the dominant antisemitic acts that was also there, which is kind of tragic in a way.

The Projects Entering the Exhibition Space

KB: To have a whole exhibition with projects that enact economic possibilities also refers to the question of scale in the work. An accusation that is easily made is that these projects are small-scale, that they might have no wider effect. We have to be very careful here. It is necessary to emphasise this work as part of larger ecosystems, and to show the much larger scale and reach that we have through our interdependent scale, rather than focusing on "scaling up" individual projects. In that sense, *Economics the Blockbuster* is a scaling up of relatively localised and small practices as a counter-capitalocentric argument.

PB: As Kathrin said at the beginning, one of the main ambitions of the exhibition was to broaden our understanding of art by acknowledging and showing that art is an economic practice and that the way art is created and circulated supports, or reproduces, certain values and suppresses other values. This exhibition is about bringing to Manchester a range of artists and collectives working in this field, working within value chains to create new forms of wealth and new forms of wealth distribution. Another aim was to think about how the institution itself functions and to work together towards reclaiming the economy and demystifying it. We wanted the exhibition to set-up a "useful" space, a practical space where the question of what is meant by economy is asked and tested. The first space you entered was the 'redrawing room' which Kathrin and Kuba already described—a studio-like setting where everyone was invited and equipped to draw out their economy. The two adjacent rooms were taken up with invited artists and collectives each presenting themselves in a way they felt was most effective for them and their projects. lumbung Kios, for example, chose to use the invitation to extend and adapt the running of their decentralised kios beyond the 100 days of documenta. They occupied the space in a very different way than, say, the Alternative School of Economics, who instead started a dialogue with striking workers in Manchester to question the neoliberal conditioning of our lives and our capacity to imagine employment systems otherwise. The exhibition spilled out into other spaces; we had an Office of Arte Útil at the Whitworth where we present the Arte Útil archive in a common room setting, encouraging conversation and investigation of the 300 plus Arte Útil case studies. Owen Griffiths and Alessandra Saviotti's contribution to the exhibition was to select case studies from the archive related to business and food economies and to create a new version of their participatory project *Tablecloth as Toolkit*, a table setting that was the site of communal lunches during the run of the exhibition, convening around questions on local land use, food poverty, and growing economies.

Elsewhere, Tŷ Pawb demonstrated their distinctive model of a market hall and art gallery. Meaning "everyone's house" in Welsh, Tŷ Pawb is a diverse ecosystem of family-owned businesses, many running for several generations, and a gallery working with the principles of useful art. With the city market facing closure and eviction due to funding cuts, the coming together of gallery and market was a survival tactic; they forged a way to co-exist within the same building. The market traders aren't trying to be artists, and artists aren't trying to be market traders. They are both doing their own practices, but in dialogue and in solidarity with each other. And that's what makes that space so particular and so brilliant to go and experience. I would say from an exhibition-making viewpoint, this raises one of the challenging aspects of this exhibition—how to capture the energy and the atmosphere of these relational systems and activities that don't typically operate within a museum space. How do you replicate a feeling of warmth and security and solidarity in a gallery space? That's another conversation, I imagine.

DR: I would like to come back to another aspect you mentioned, Poppy, how the space also invites or interpellates visitors and people and how it also creates the feel of a communal moment for the public. It's not so easy to come to that, to make that happen. How did you all work with that? And how to welcome the discourse into the space.

PB: *Economics the Blockbuster* happened in the three

Tŷ Pawb, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023. Photo credit: Michael Pollard

Company Drinks, installation view at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, 2023.
Photo credit: Michael Pollard

large white-cube galleries as well as other spaces across the Whitworth. I mentioned the Office of Arte Útil. We also used the School of Creativity, our large studio space on the second floor of the Whitworth that is home to several community and school groups. We located some of the drawing activities and staff workshops there. Artists and collectives in the exhibition also occupied shop space, and we ran activities in the park, too. The show permeated through the building in different modes, disrupting any notion of a frontal encounter with it.

Within all these spaces, we offered group seating and tables, bean bags, paper and pencils, etc.—tools to facilitate spending time, conversation, and ideas-sharing. We also made an effort to use these exhibition spaces ourselves, for meetings and talks, to help unlock the gallery space from a display mode to an open, ideas-in-continual-process mode.

Responses

Shwetal Patel: Now that the exhibition has opened, I am interested in learning more about what parts may have resonated with the public, and are there things that have emerged for you that weren't so apparent during the curatorial process? I ask because the exhibition critiques the system, but also critiques oneself as an institution in terms of your own practices and modus operandi.

PB: It was interesting to see who would respond to the call that the exhibition sent out. I was most taken by the enthusiastic responses from economic historians, economists, and business professors that wanted to talk and thrash out the ideas. It's rare to have a space to enter economic thinking visually and through creative practice, and this led to some fascinating conversations around transformative approaches to knowledge production. We also had a range of community organisers and activists, many internationally based, who sought out the show, keen to connect with the varying forms of self-organisation. We had less of an art audience than expected, I would say—very little art press, for example—which was surprising given that the project was driven by the thinking and practice of artists and was landing at a time when economy was such a hotly debated topic.

KS: Concerning the lack of interest, we need to remember that art always requires some kind of economic base. However, the artistic mainstream is based on denial of its own economic practice. Art costs so much, because it is priceless, isn't it? And interestingly, typically only when art workers openly start to address their own economies are they treated as if they were trouble-makers, and their efforts diminished or side-lined. But the artistic economies depend on transfers of money and value between public institutions and private individuals, exhibitions and markets. This economy is very whimsical, depends on a "love of art" and the huge egos of major collectors; it involves luxury and rests on power structures. This economy underpins individual careers and institutional operations alike. Not surprising that people are either not interested or too anxious to address these economies, and even less inclined to challenge them.

SP: I'm a huge fan of the exhibition, also because I hold an undergraduate degree in economics and explored similar socio-economic themes for my doctoral research. Referring to John Ruskin – and Manchester as the birthplace of industrialisation – I think, generally, we also tend to look at the art economy from a Western capitalist perspective. This can exclude things that perhaps don't belong within that paradigm. Because I think there's a danger to suggest that this is the entirety of it, especially when it is placed in a museum and the subject matter is universalised in this way.

PB: The show was never meant to be any kind of survey on art as economy, and all the projects within the exhibition tie back to Manchester or the Whitworth in some way; they were chosen for their entangled connections to our context. For example, CATPC operates from a former Unilever plantation in Lusanga in the DRC. Known as 'Leverville', that area of the DRC was named after the company's founder William Lever, a man born in Greater Manchester, and who established his business and built his village for UK workers at Port Sunlight, just forty miles away from the Whitworth. I think that's really important. Because, of course, we are talking about it from our position as a large museum in Manchester in the UK, a museum and city founded through wealth accumulated through the Industrial Revolution and the colonial and capitalist systems that emerged from that moment.

KB: It became clear that all the projects have a direct connection to the museum and became for this show also the practice of the museum. They're not just exhib-

its imported into the museum. They're somehow connected to other economic activities or programmes that have economic underpinnings in the museum, such as the collection, the Whitworth Grow group, or local and regional alliances. So, that made it much easier for us to think from our position. And, of course, ideally, these kinds of projects with conversations on what economy is would be shared and occupied with positions coming from other geographies in the next few years in the arts. And again, let's not forget that lumbung started doing multi-local practice, this by explicitly using a non-anglicised vocabulary and terminology.

KS: I think it's very important to emphasise that the work of the Community Economies Research Network, spearheaded by Gibson and Graham, and with which we are affiliated, targets this Western capitalocentric notion of what economy is. And this was the main driver of our exhibition, which was not envisioned as a comprehensive overview, but was very much situated. The show was linked to Manchester and embedded in the practical experimentation of the Whitworth as a constituent museum. But on the other hand, the questions which we developed there are important to ask everywhere. In the process of making this exhibition, I travelled between Warsaw and the UK, and was also in touch with a lot of people elsewhere, discussing artistic economies with my students and with fellow art workers. And also in semi-peripheries of the EU, a lot of people worry about how to connect art with some sort of living. And they are often atomised and compete in the winner-takes-all artistic economies, the rules of this game rigged against all but a privileged few. And here, I like to emphasise there must be some ways of doing it differently. Currently, you learn that you are powerless unless you make it to the very top of the hierarchies.

It is important to link this abstraction to a lived experience, and to talk with others about how we can imagine our own lives differently. Images can help a lot; one of Kathrin's slogans is keep it complex and make it clear, and I think it is such a good motto also for redrawing exercises. They also help us imagine and visualise complexity. People's lives are different depending on their class, race, gender, and depending on whatever they plan to do. But the method of thinking about your life as a way of creating economy, generating resources under which you may have a semblance of control, may be quite liberating for people. Because they are actually always being told that they are powerless, and yet another critical reiteration will not change it. Katherine Gibson emphasises that the goal of community economies is to reclaim economy as a daily practice. Redrawing practices share a similar goal. When you map your economies, and visualise the rich web of practices and links in which we are all enmeshed, it may be easier to take a bit of control. You may not feel as powerless and maybe even start thinking that this control is possible. It is about seeing the wealth that you actually generate with your collective practices, how it is connected to the wider economic system. This may help you imagine and picture even those grander systems differently, and hopefully get together with others and change them.

OnCurating: Thank you for this wonderful, hopeful ending that speaks about agency and what is possible.

The interview was conducted 2 October 2023 via Zoom.

Economics the Blockbuster: It's not Business as Usual was held at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester from 30 June – 22 October 2023, presented as part of Manchester International Festival. The exhibition was initiated by Alistair Hudson and is shaped by a collaborative group led by Poppy Bowers, and including John Byrne, Kathrin Böhm and Kuba Szreder (Centre for Plausible Economies), Ismail Ertürk, Alessandra Saviotti, Textbook Studio, Holly Shuttleworth, Ed Watts and Hannah Vollam. The exhibition presented work by: Association de Arte Útil, Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) and Renzo Martens, Company Drinks, Goldin+Senneby, Kathrin Böhm and Kuba Szreder (Centre for Plausible Economies), lumbung Kios, Owen Griffiths and Alessandra Saviotti, Rosalie Schweiker, The Alternative School of Economics (Ruth Beale and Amy Feneck) and Tŷ Pawb.

Alistair Hudson has been appointed the next Artistic-Scientific Chairman of the Zentrum für Kunst und Medien (ZKM) Karlsruhe, Germany. Alistair Hudson was appointed Director of the Whitworth and Manchester Art Gallery in February 2018 and will leave that post in January 2023. Prior to his move to Manchester Alistair was Director of Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art where his vision was based on the concept of the Useful Museum. In the preceding ten years he was Deputy Director of Grizedale Arts which gained critical acclaim for its radical approaches to working with artists and communities, based on the idea that art

should be useful and not just an object of contemplation. Alistair is co-director of the Asociación de Arte Útil with Tania Bruguera – an expansive international project and online archive that forms part of the Uses of Art programmes with the L'internationale confederation.

Poppy Bowers is Curator and Interim Head of Exhibitions at the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, where she co-curated *Economics the Blockbuster: It's not business as usual*. She works across exhibitions, commissions, publishing and acquisitions of contemporary art, developing a focus on art as a social and economic practice. Alongside Alistair Hudson, she curated the group show, *Joy for Ever: How to Use Art to Change the World and its Price in the Market* (2019), and recently completed an MRes in Advanced Practices at Goldsmiths College on *Convivial Economies*, exploring new ways to gather to enact a collective reimagining of the art institution. Poppy is Series Editor of *Whitworth Manuals*, a new contemporary art book series between the Whitworth and Manchester University Press.

Centre for Plausible Economies (CPE) was initiated in 2018 by Kathrin Böhm and Kuba Szreder, to bring together artistic imagination and economic thinking. CPE believes that everybody is exposed to economic forces, but nobody seems to be in control. Responding to this frustration with upbeat pragmatism, CPE serves as a platform for mapping and redrawing economic systems. Recent initiatives of CPE include an ethical and pragmatic compass of Interdependent Art Worlds (The Showroom London and Sternberg Press) and (Re-)Drawing the Economy a multi-local research and workshop programme together with the Community Economies Institute. CPE has developed workshop and seminar programmes for Zeppelin University, Friedrichshafen; Warsaw Biennial; and Alanus University, Alfter. CPE publishes texts, visual essays and manifestos on interdependent art worlds, icebergian economies of contemporary art, and artistic means of reclaiming the economy.

Katrin Böhm: I keep calling myself an artist and I prefer to work within everyday situations. My practice is trans-disciplinary and collaborative, and mainly takes place in non-art situations – be it an enterprise, a suburban neighbourhood, a rural community or a department for business management. I initially studied Abstract Painting and Art Pedagogy at the Academy of Fine Art Nuremberg, and later received an MA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College London.

Kuba Szreder is a researcher, curator, and a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Art in Warsaw. He cooperates with artistic unions, consortia of post-artistic practitioners, clusters of art-researchers, art collectives and artistic institutions in Poland, UK, and other European countries. He is editor and author of several catalogues, books, readers, book chapters, articles and manifestos, in which he scrutinizes the social, economic, and theoretical aspects of the expanded field of art. Current research interests include curating interdisciplinary projects, artistic research, new models of artistic institutions, artistic self-organization, postartistic theory and practice. In 2021 his book The ABC of the projectariat: living and working in a precarious art world was published by the Manchester University Press and the Whitworth.

Ronald Kolb is a researcher, lecturer, curator, designer and filmmaker, based between Stuttgart and Zurich. Co-Head of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, ZHdK and Co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal On-Curating.org. PHD candidate in the Practice-Based Doctoral Programme in Curating, University of Reading/ZHdK. The doctorale thesis entitled "Curating as Governmental Practices. Post-Exhibitionary Practices under Translocal Conditions in Governmental Constellations" deals with curatorial practices in global/situated contexts in light of governmentality – its entanglements in representational power and self-organized modes of participatory practices in the arts.

Shwetal Ashvin Patel is a writer and researcher practising at the intersection of visual art, exhibition-making and development studies. He works internationally– primarily in Europe and South Asia– and is a founding member of Kochi-Muziris Biennale in India, responsible for international partnerships and programmes. He holds a practice-based PhD from Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, where his thesis was titled 'Biennale Practices: Making and Sustaining Visual Art Platforms'. He is a guest lecturer at Zürich University of the Arts, Royal College of Art, and Exeter University, besides being an editorial

board member at OnCurating.org and a trustee at Milton Keynes Museum and Coventry Biennale.

Dorothee Richter is Professor in Contemporary Curating at the University of Reading, UK, and head of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, CAS/MAS Curating at the Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland; She is director of the PhD in Practice in Curating Programme, University of Reading. Richter has worked extensively as a curator: she was initiator of Curating Degree Zero Archive, Curator of Kuenstlerhaus Bremen, at which she curated different symposia on feminist issues in contemporary arts and an archive on feminist practices, Materialien/Materials; recently she directed, together with Ronald Kolb, a film on Fluxus: Flux Us Now, Fluxus Explored with a Camera. She is executive editor of OnCurating.org.

From Speculation to Infrastructure: Material and Method in the Politics of Contemporary Art

Marina Vishmidt

From the beginning of my involvement in the field of art and cultural production, whether I was practising as an academic, a writer, an organiser, an editor, my focus has always been, in one way or another, on conditions of possibility, whether those conditions are considered formal, social, economic, historical, or ontological. The conditions of possibility include the existence and allowances of a demarcated field of practice, and the practices that transpire in that field, which mean the conditions of legibility for practices to both register in that field though they might originate somewhere else, and for practices originating in that field to work transversally or away from it. So, conditions for and in a field, but also its composition, along the vectors of objective and subjective determination by race, class, gender, and relation to the law.

In other words, since before the beginning, my experience and thus my understanding of culture has been collective, with the social and personal dimensions always embedded in the conceptual. Because my entry to participation was at first in zine culture, which was very much defined by *riot grrrl*, punk, and infinite configurations of both projects and structures that were DIY, the artistic and political, material and method, were co-constitutive; the milieu in its positioning was defined by antagonism, not just politically on specific issues in a right-wing cultural environment, but toward the modes of individualised celebrity and mystified creativity typical of mainstream culture. Thus, it was always clear that the ways of organising artistic production were as critical and political as anything that could be isolated as a work or as a product, and in fact the distinctions between these, which can also be read along the process/product binary, were always contingent and matters of practice and proximity.

So this was the 1990s, obviously, the last moment in capitalist modernity, especially in the West, or the imperial/colonial rich world, when something like a self-sustaining and oppositional underground culture could be said to exist, although even then the principles and practicalities of separation from what was then called the "mainstream" were starting to break down, which perhaps culminates in the contemporary obsolescence of the concept of "selling out" and the accompanying structure of feeling no less than the economic agenda of rugged independence it represented. Of course, many things are obvious now that would have been obvious to many also at the time; that is, as a dissident cultural milieu in the US, it was a sphere of privilege, or, in a more materialist vocabulary, a "resource advantage" in many ways—predominantly white, English-speaking—and thus exerting a disproportionate cultural influence even as a reference or a model of "underground" and independent musical, publishing, and artistic practice. And gender was a much more visible battle than other group identifiers ascribed for oppression and exploitation—at least in that milieu. Certainly, there were many other milieus in the "underground" (you only need to think of the Detroit techno collective Underground Resistance), so it's important to come to this as only one instantiation of an antagonistic/self-sufficient cultural logic, again, both in terms of structure and composition. And it's also not to assert that this is a logic that is extinct

or has been made extinct by social media platforms and their powers of capital and attention concentration and fragmentation. Funded, unfunded, less-funded, variably funded—a lot of DIY culture continues to exist, especially in poetry and artist publishing, to take just one local example.

The reason I wanted to start with this very contained flashback is perhaps to see if it can furnish a backdrop for explaining the research I went on to do, mainly in art theory and political theory, which approached the social existence of artistic and visual practice, the moving image in many cases, not as a thing in the world, or even as a process, but as a contradiction—the contradiction between its social conditions as an elite pursuit, an asset class, or a laundromat for hegemonic values, and its horizon as an articulation of emancipation, of material, cognitive, and aesthetic as well as social relations. I thought about this contradiction but also about the kinds of further contradictions that emerge from it, for example, the institutionalization of the latter—art as emancipation (and the institutionalization of that observation as critique) under the material conditions of the former—art as the index of class rule. Given these emphases, in my scholarly work I've been much influenced by Adorno, consistently by notions such as his framing of the proposition of aesthetic autonomy in its relations of dependence on social heteronomy, the double notion of art as absolute commodity and absolute artwork (with "absolute" standing in for the imperialism of exchange value in a capitalist society that tells itself fairy-tales about artistic transcendence *as* art's use value, or, in a more contemporary mode, conflating usefulness and criticality), and also, of course, by the relationship between artistic practice and the epistemic refusal that takes the name of "non-identity."

This brings me to the approaches mentioned in the synopsis for this essay as setting the parameters for my work at present, as well as the recent past: speculation and infrastructure. Social and collective production as the smallest unit of meaningful analysis, with the implication that the "trans-individual" is the smallest meaningful unit of subjectivity, a dialectical and non-exhaustive approach suspicious of theoretical closures or inflations of all kinds. These methodological and political considerations led me to speculation as a way of conceptualising both artistic practice and the quantified, financialised, and extractive social reality it is working from and with, speculation as the non-identity between speculative thought and the social and political practices it makes possible – speculation as thinking art from the standpoint of its transformative capacities – and speculation as the closed loop of extraction and profit. And then to infrastructure as a way of understanding both what kind of structures *repeat*, as it were, in one definition of infrastructure, how they repeat across scales, and how the speculative force of aesthetics can clarify, open up, and re-purpose these infrastructures in investigative and/or transversal political situations, as well as dis-appropriate them or their constituent parts for other ends.

Having set the methodological scene for those two approaches, I'd like to move anti-clockwise, at least in terms of Marx's plotting of a movement from the abstract to the concrete, to a more in-depth exploration of what I mean in working with the concepts of "speculation" and "infrastructure" as what I call "experimental totalizations."

Initially, I take speculation in its character as a powerful logic of contemporary life whose key instantiations are art and finance. Both are premised on the power of contingency, the fluidity of temporality, and experimentation with the creation (and capitalisation) of possible worlds. Artistic autonomy, the self-legislation of the space of art, was once and often still is seen as the freedom to speculate wildly on material and

social possibilities. The artist as a speculative subject is also seen as the paragon of creativity, the complete opposite of both a *homo economicus* obsessed with balance sheets and value-added and optimising investment, and a *homo laborans*, in Hannah Arendt's terms, which we would have to expand from her gender-deterministic framework to include those whose lives are limited by the imperative to work and to reproduce workers in conditions where both that work and its results are controlled and accumulated by others. However, once social reality becomes speculative and opaque in its own right, risky and algorithmic, overhauled by networked markets in everything what becomes of the distinction between not just art and finance, but art and life? In working with these premises, I also try to develop art historical methodologies that study specific practices as crystals of both ownership and dispossession, with all the strategic and ontological ambiguities that cluster around both of those poles. Basically, I aim to grasp the stakes of speculation as an issue for current and recent artistic practice, and to develop a transversal concept of speculation in doing so, one which departs from, but is not bound by, the lived ideologies of art and finance sketched out above.

The subjective drive to speculation as the generation of "new ideas" per se becomes codified as "creativity" in the neoliberal labour market. As a consequence, creativity becomes, paradoxically, a characteristic of abstract labour, which was Marx's generic category for the social institution of wage labour in a capitalist society—"abstract," because most labour relationships end up being indifferent to the content of the labour and are mainly used for acquiring money to live, or, if you are a capitalist or entrepreneur, to accumulate or speculate with. I argue that such a shift heralds the conversion of the fetishised creativity of art into a pre-eminent instance of speculation as a mode of production, since art becomes no longer just a commodity in the market or a gratuitous activity but increasingly a tool of socialisation into the speculative mode and an accessory to the re-valorisation of land and the displacement of populations, as in the well-known link between art venues and gentrification. It thus takes on a new instrumentality relative to the dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy assigned to art by Marxist critics such as Adorno. At the same time, this is an instrumentality which in turn speculates with the autonomy and creative freedom assigned specifically to art in an unfree society in order to ground both its ethical claims and its financial value, depending on the context.

As I outline in my book *Speculation as a Mode of Production*, the core structural analogy between art and money is that both constitute instances of self-valorising value, insofar as both are kinds of social mediation that are anchored in a self-referential, recursive, or reflexive circuit of valorisation. Critical value in art is generated from transactions within its semantic domain, much as in speculative finance—or "fictitious capital," in Marx's terms—money generates more money through transactions internal to financial markets, altogether avoiding the sphere of production, as it is usually understood. This homology between art and money that I am drawing, one which reveals both art and money as marked by the nebulousness and reflexivity of value claims, has been picked up by artists who collide so-called "critical value" with "capital value" in works exploring the social and formal correspondences between works of art and money. Max Haiven is a colleague who has done excellent work in cataloguing and theorising these kinds of practices in his recent book, *Art After Money, Money After Art*. But this discussion of a homology is also intended to illuminate another pole of art's relation to the real abstraction of the capital relation, one which is constituted by the parallels between artistic subjectivity and a self-motivated and creative labour force increasingly encouraged to see itself as an investment, i.e., to model itself on the endless productivity of capital rather than labour, specifically a financialised capital which

expands by means of (managed) risk. This is not just an elite labour force, of course, as the placebos of flexibility and self-management increasingly come to substitute for any employer responsibility, as evident in the gig economy.

From being at least hypothetically separate from the economy, the artist becomes a creative tasked with diligently optimising their quantified self, an increasingly abject and coercive situation, and the two senses of speculation—artistic thinking and financial operations—converge, something we have observed not just in the more familiar critical descriptions of the artist as entrepreneurial subject par excellence but in more recent developments such as crypto-art and NFTs, where the moments of artistic creation and market valorisation can no longer be kept apart, and neither can coercion and speculation in a stagnant, crisis-prone economy freedom of finance, subjugation of labour). Here, a dependency and a resonance emerge between the open-ended processes of speculative thought and the profit-driven (or, in cybernetic terms, homeostatic) world of financial speculation. At the same time, however, we need to retain another sense of speculation, as the commitment to experimentation and non-utility, for social and political as well as aesthetic and cognitive reasons. As Henk Slager notes, "From an artistic perspective, it seems essential to start investigating the following methodological question: how could we engage in that assignment of reconsidering and revealing speculation in order to arrive at novel panoramas and 'not-yet-known-knowledge?'" We can here also think of speculative philosophical propositions such as G.W.F. Hegel's speculative logic, Theodor W. Adorno's concept of non-identity—as already mentioned—or Denise Ferreira da Silva's "difference without separability" as some conceptual and methodological touchstones. Art-historically speaking, when we work with these kinds of paradigms in our research, we can build on the extraordinary material and social sensitivity and concreteness of art history as a scholarly approach in order to contextualise artworks in their conditions of production and exchange in such a way as to be able to see artistic practices and materials in the social relations and histories they mediate, and vice versa, and see what ruptures, unknowns, contradictions, and affiliations can be found and developed. With a speculative approach, we do not need to define binaries, even in order to overcome them or integrate a devalued pole into a valued one (such as art and labour, art and life, art and politics, etc.) but to constantly redefine our terms with reference to the kinds of questions the material asks, and asks from us, and to see the divisions we encounter as themselves historical, needing to be explained rather than described, and explained often in terms of systemic as well as local social contradiction and specificity. Speculation, thus, as a method as well as a field of study and praxis, is one that necessitates a situated perspective, but also a readiness for that perspective to shift, both in light of its objects and the shifting problematics and imperatives of knowledge production in its social, historical, and economic relations and antagonisms. In this way, the "speculative" is brought into contact with the "materialist," with the former the vector of transformation and the latter of social reality. As tendencies, as constitutive of relations rather than objects, and objects as temporary crystals of relations in a wider "social synthesis," these comprise the touchstones for my project.

With all this in mind, there are a few, more granular, reservations. Speculative practices and fields of inquiry must be situated in their material conditions. Given the speculative infrastructure of contemporary capitalism, it is clear that the speculative capacity of both the science-adjacent "research- based" and a "fictioning" or narrative approach to art practice are both determined by speculative capitalism, which includes its market, institutional, and data articulations. A "forensic" aesthetics is no more, or less, integrated into the speculative (as, e.g., knowledge production) than a more material-,

object-, or fantasy-based one. Indeed, it was a number of years ago now that Jacques Rancière noted that de-materialised art and de-materialised capital tend to rhyme: "The immateriality of concepts and images, instead of doing away with private appropriation, turned out to be its best refuge, the place where its reality is tantamount to its self-legitimation." Here, we see that, as with labour, it is not the content of the art but how that labour is exchanged, distributed, and represented; that is, how it is inscribed into circuits of valorisation even when it is not directly "value-producing" in itself. Here, we could frame the key critical question in speculative terms, transposing Marx's question about labour to art: it's not that we need to find the value behind the social form of art, but to ask instead, why is it that in our society value takes the form of art?

To move now to a discussion of the role that the category of "infrastructure" has lately taken in my work, I want to start with a citation from Vilém Flusser, who talks about "envisioning," by which he means "trying to turn an automatic apparatus against its own condition of being automatic." In the context of my work, without a doubt, this implicates the automaticity of value valorising itself, what Marx calls the "automatic subject."

Over the past few years, over the particular crises which have dominated our lives and awareness—episodes of climate collapse by fire and water, the pandemic, and the horrific military campaigns attacking the people of Syria, Palestine, Yemen, and Ukraine—we have also heard a lot about what is often called "critical infrastructure," that is, the power grid, server architecture/internet, water supplies, all the semi-automated networks key to our survival that a depletion of supplies, a system fault, or a malicious hacking operation can render dysfunctional, with consequences that are potentially destructive as well as unpredictable, depending on how long such systems remain "offline." These are also scenarios that have, of course, taken place, wherever there has been a climate crisis-induced natural disaster such as flooding and fire, or as a consequence of war. Thus, the notion of critical infrastructure, and the resources and workers that keep it operating or are vulnerable to attack, came to mind in this project, which is an attempt to see how the category of critique needs to be revised when it is posited as operating on an infrastructural and not simply discursive level, as well as to see how the operation of critique can generate new relations between those discursive and infrastructural levels. But also whether indeed the discursive and philosophical notion of critique, which has been justifiably queried from so many perspectives over the recent period, is or isn't a "critical infrastructure" for how organisational and political change happens in the space of art and how broader changes can resonate there.

Infrastructural critique needs to reckon with what it means that infrastructure is that which persists and makes possible, insofar as it also makes impossible, requiring us to align a thinking of infrastructure with Foucault's discussion of regimes of governmentality whose purpose is to make live and let die. Infrastructure, then, is always specific: it is sustained and maintained to achieve certain biopolitical outcomes, to enable certain strategies of accumulation that are founded on destroyed infrastructure for some, insofar as it supports accumulation for others, that is, the extraction and waste disposal of labours, lives, and natures. A recent intervention in an online series on infrastructure and coloniality notes that "race is an infrastructure" which mediates access to resources, whose withholding is key to the population management key for efficient extraction—differentiated management of "infrastructural coercion" and "infrastructural neglect." Death by infrastructure, as in large areas inhabited by communities subject to environmental racism, unfolds in the shadows of death by police violence,

death by poverty, and deaths by despair; it could arguably even be said to serve as a precondition for all of these.

And yet, if infrastructure should be identified and historicised as the material basis for violent processes of racialisation, for a materialist analysis it is crucial as well to look at the other side of this argument. Who benefits? Notably, extractive corporations and the perma-colonial states in which they are imbricated, now reproduced at a global scale. For Zandi Sherman, infrastructural and ontological lenses are not opposed; "infrastructure is ontological" because it is the material basis for the reproduction of race. The social being of race is both produced by the operations of extractive infrastructure, and race is an infrastructure in its own right, legitimating the normalised violence that physical infrastructure both captures and extends.

If we stick to the idea that race is an infrastructure, what else does it make possible as the converse of its pedagogy of abjection and disavowal? As thinkers such as Sylvia Wynter, David Lloyd, and Denise Ferreira da Silva have been elaborating, what it makes possible is the "human." The human as the rational subject who creates and maintains infrastructures of progress and abundance where once there was only primitive subsistence and warfare. The human as the bringer of infrastructure to a chaotic nature, where infrastructure and property claims come into light in the same moment. As English-language predicates such as "humane" and concepts such as humanity and humanism demonstrate, the human marks the point of inextricability of domination and care which an infrastructure can be said to materialize. Can we jettison this figure of normativity while holding on to a notion of ethics, such as the "poethics" of existence without the "separability" that makes domination acceptable? Rather than trying to answer that knotty question immediately, I want now to keep moving through some more recent approaches to the infrastructural.

With the foregoing consideration of the relation between infrastructure and critical praxis, what has been elided so far are current debates around blockage, occupation, and sabotage and their efficiency in disrupting a capitalism wholly dependent on the functionality of supply chains, on the just-in-time circulation of objects, services, and data along waterways, pipelines, fibreoptic cables, and transport systems. This kind of practical critique of infrastructure has been extensively theorised in recent discussions, whether it's in terms of struggles that include dimensions of decolonial and indigenous sovereignty, such as the multiple pipeline-blocking movements in North America since 2018's NoDAPL, or the blockage of West Coast ports in the United States. Aside from the agency of organised pushback, of course, there are the ongoing significant logistical drags caused by the fallout of the pandemic such as labour shortages, high fuel prices, and back-ups in shipping lanes. More generally, theorists such as Joshua Clover famously contended in the mid-2010s that sabotage has gained an epochal salience in an era when capitalism's secular tendency to flee from production into circulation (this covering sectors from transport to services to financialization) has made it not just more vulnerable to forms of logistical sabotage, but that sabotage, blockage, and riot were the modes of antagonism more relevant to this composition of capital.
And now to recap, conditions of possibility in art open up into the analysis of different infrastructural approaches to both culture and politics, and the relation between these approaches—some directly material, others more conceptual or metaphorical—remains *speculative,* that is, defined through their identity in difference.
It may now be the time to turn to some specific cases of art production or art institutions that can be thought under the rubric of "infrastructure." It is clear that infrastructural critique has made inroads here, though it remains a minoritarian tendency when

measured against the pervasiveness of representational and narrative strategies. We can discuss infrastructural critique with reference to movements around labour organising in arts institutions, such as the wave of unionising of art workers since the beginning of the pandemic, as well as social movements focusing on arts institutions which centre anti-colonial solidarity at arts institutions such as Decolonize This Place or Strike MoMA in NYC, to take two much-reported instances. These were instances that inhabited the gap between art institutions' gestural benevolence and material violence in order to insert radical disruption in the form of solidarity with struggles elsewhere, predominantly around police violence, racialised gentrification, or the colonial war against Palestinians. Yet, infrastructural critique can also characterise specific practices of artists and institutions as a move that similarly takes their practice beyond the comfort zone of reflexivity and thus veers away from the "lane" allocated to it by institutional critique.

Cameron Rowland's intensively researched and conceptually adroit projects zero in on the apparatus of racialised capitalism as a spectrum of real abstractions. These real abstractions, or, abstractions with deadly effects, include race, property, and value, as they work through prisons, police, and cultural and state authorities, now and in the abiding past. These abstractions in turn provide both formal and practical tools for an aesthetics that is not so much "forensic" as it is prismatic. On the point of involving the arts institution in a financial market venture, there is an echo of early institution-critical projects such as Robert Morris's *Money* (1969). The difference is in the politics and the purpose; it's not about disclosing something already evident about the art institution's intimacy with speculative capital. Such an intimacy is only one symptom among many of the ties between culture and private property, with dispossession as the basis of both. There is often a pedagogical performativity involved which both presents a detailed historical array of texts and a selective summoning of artefacts at the same time as a real-time deployment of that same legal machinery which upholds the sanctity of property, present and past. A partial list would be 2020's *Encumbrance* at London's ICA, which involved the mortgaging of the royal building's mahogany fittings, obtained in colonial trade; 2017's *Public Money,* which required the Whitney to invest in anti-recidivism social impact bonds issued by a California municipality; *Disgorgement* (2016), the establishment of an insurance trust held in the name of Artists Space (since collected by MoMA), which bought shares in the slave insurance policies still held by a major global insurer, and which will pay out in the event of federal financial reparations for chattel slavery in the U.S.; and *91020000* (2016), which put on display the mobile infrastructure of the public realm in the state of New York—school and office furniture made by prison labour. Many of these objects cannot be sold to any collection but only rented, at cost—that is, the price paid at a police auction or to a prison-made furniture manufacturer—for a period of five years pending renewal or return to the artist. In much of Rowland's work, a piece of infrastructure relates a history of property and de-humanisation through the way it functions rather than in what it uses artistic means to depict. This, in conjunction with the frequent implication of the institution as a "collaborator" (both with Rowland and the system he is highlighting), is what casts his practice as one of infrastructural critique.

In an essay by the artist and Distributed Cognition Cooperative member Anna Engelhard, contextualizing her project *The Crimean Bridge*, she contends, in line with Mitchell's argument earlier on, that the politics of infrastructure are often cloaked by the image of utility, which, in the case of a bridge, assumes the even more benign trappings of connection, as opposed to the conflict signalled by a wall. The bridge constructed by Russia over the Kerch Strait between Russia and the Crimean Peninsula is analysed by

Engelhardt as a de factor "wall" or border, facilitating Russian economic colonialism in Ukraine before, during, and after its 2014 annexation. This is a model of infrastructure as "war by other means" that she observes in the depiction of social media platforms such as Facebook as global engines of connection, even as they facilitate multi-scalar conflict—a trope familiar from 18th-century ideologists of capitalism who juxtaposed civilised commerce to war, blithely averting the gaze from the inseparability between them established by the several centuries of settler colonialism and trade in humans that had already elapsed by the time those texts were written.

Working with this example of logistics which communicates flow even while enforcing restriction and promoting repression in the guise of mobility, Engelhardt disassembles the bridge in her essay while an eponymous film uses volumetrics, crystallography, clips of RT reports, and other technical media to re-assemble it in all its dimensions as a species of "hybrid warfare" with ecological and no less than geopolitical impacts that unfold over several temporalities. Here, the infrastructural critique does not show the recursive volatility that comes from implicating its own material sites of enunciation as part of the object, as with Cameron Rowland's work. However, the site of enunciation may get another spin here—it is not the art institution that is key, but digital platforms. It is the media-propaganda complex that combines advanced technology and crude manipulation, the logistics of war and the logistics of trade exemplified in the Crimean case. Infrastructure here is the real abstraction of communication which is at the core of violence, with property just one of its symptoms.

Finally, and in a change of key, it may be helpful to look at a few instances of organisational rather than artistic practice, with learning from artistic practice as its strategy: "Reconsidering Institutional Conduct (Almost Everything Still Remains to be Done)" at Kunstlerhaus Stuttgart last year. This project's relation to infrastructural critique could be detected precisely in the "inward- and outward-facing" task it set itself, to revisit its protocols of institutional governance as a site of radical re-making in a wider social landscape that desperately required revolutionary change, and which could start with where it was as a site of implementation of that change, part of which meant rethinking the boundaries of its inside and its outside. While the long-term implications of this two-day process have not yet come into focus, it joins a number of "drafting" projects situated in arts institutions over the past decade, some of which have participated in or facilitated an institutional shift already underway, as with the drafting of a "Convention on the Use of Space" organised by Adelita Husni-Bey with local housing groups in 2018, or the initiation of a "Climate Justice Code" for arts organisations in 2019, both at Casco (now the Casco Art Institute – Working for the Commons) in Utrecht. This suggests that, at least for a fraction of smaller Western arts organisations, a self-perception of themselves as infrastructure—as a part of the functional social landscape—is starting to supplant a traditional concept of the institution as a detached container that displays aspects of that landscape. The repercussions of this type of shift may be variable and intermittent, and certainly local, with the "local" here addressing a context of reference that can be geographic but also discursive. No doubt there are risks of insularity if the drive for reflexivity leads to an over-emphasis on the agency of the institution rather than its conditions of possibility. While this is connected to, if not determined by, broader levels of social struggle, it is also influenced by the vision of political agency an arts institution chooses to embody and/or amplify in its own situation.

So, to conclude, all these questions point to the need to understand the concept of critique at issue in "infrastructural critique." The shift argued for above cannot leave critique untouched in its own right, with its acknowledged genealogy in the uncondi-

tional autonomy of the isolated and European-identified Enlightenment subject informing most debates around the notion in the sphere of radical theory these days. This ensures that the history, no less than the potential of critique as a material practice of antagonism, gets sidelined, one whose subject, if it has one, is dispersive and collective. Critique is at its philosophical origins an analysis of "conditions of possibility," but the analysis of conditions of possibility itself has conditions of possibility that are material and not epistemological—infrastructural, in other words. The resources necessary to flesh out this other practice of critique, in an apparent paradox, owe substantially to contemporary debates around "identity politics," inasmuch as those debates can also intensify the salience of a relational non-identity and negativity to any notion of critique that would make claims on the infrastructure that provides it with its conditions, that is to say, with the material possibilities of critique as well as its object. When Hannah Black writes about "the self as historical and social material" in the space of art, a self that entails a non-identity with the "real structures of 'identity,'" she is describing identity as a structure imposed on the non-white, non-male, cultural worker, whether it's by liberal arts institutions looking to burnish their inclusion agendas or "identity critics" who consistently frame a reified notion of "identity" as distractions from class on the Left. In this crude concept of "identity," which is identitarian at the same time as it identifies with "criticality," and where critique is only possible in the embrace of the sotto-voce whiteness of universality, there is a contradiction between identity and non-identity that recalls Adorno's Hegelian appropriation of the latter but also visibly Hegel's own argument in the Science of Logic when he notes that, "Essence is mere Identity and reflection in itself only as it is self-relating negativity, and in that way self-repulsion. It contains therefore essentially the characteristic of Difference." Conversely, an infrastructural critique is defined by the tension between the clarifying negativity of knowing who its opponents are and the differences that traverse its own speaking position. Critique is then the practice of non-identity, a self-relating negativity. It is the irreconcilability without end of social antagonism, which is invariably reflected in the institution of art and its real-world spaces, even as they programmatically commit to inclusion to undercut their own status, at least on some level, as infrastructures of domination. This antagonism is turned into an aporia, insoluble, and perhaps not even interesting, if confined within the framework of the institution—that is, at the level of programming—but as soon as it gains a transversal dimension by looking to the infrastructure, and sees itself too as infrastructure, there is a gain (one could even call it a "gain of function"?) in the capacity of critique to not only query its own conditions of existence but to see how the resources of critique itself can provide infrastructure for other fights which pull the institution—exhibiting, but also academic—into their vortex.

This is one way of thinking speculation and infrastructure alongside one another; what I am proposing is that the "means of abstraction" or speculation also need to be thought from the bottom-up and inside-out, in conjunction with social struggle, and the question of abstraction is not just about control but also can give us a relational view on artistic and economic practices as they constitute social *forms*: the smallest meaningful unit of a politically entangled art-historical, art-theoretical method.

This lecture was held within the "Rudolf Arnheim Guest Professorship" in the Art History Department of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Humboldt University in Berlin in 4th July 2022 . This "Rudolf Arnheim Guest Professorship" is a collaboration of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and the German Academic Exchange Service.

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Another Currency, Another Speculation: Reflections on Art and Economies Projects at *documenta fifteen*

Mi You

Under the scorching midsummer sun in Kassel, Arief Yudi, the founder of rural West Java-based Jatiwangi Art Factory, stood with an Indonesian cigarette in his hand and asked me pensively, "What is the currency of poor people?" Around him, a dozen youngsters from the collective, all wearing straw hats, were busy setting up booths to sell coffee beans from Indonesia and preparing a sound performance using face bricks.

In recent years, the socioeconomic condition of the contemporary art field has been scrupulously examined, so much so that there is a growing consensus that material conditions (co-)determine the reproduction of the art system, be it funding systems, labor relations, or cultural political agendas. Much ink has been spilt on the ideological "critical virtue" of art,[1] while engagements with different forms of economies beyond the rather parochial art market are proliferating, though long overdue. This article looks closely at examples of artists probing into and prototyping economies at *documenta fifteen*, driven by the perennial question: how is value produced and accounted for? And more pragmatically, how to claim value and inject liquidity into a system where there is none?

Currencies Looking for Liquidity

Jatiwangi Art Factory has brought the local clay roof tile factory in rural West Java back to life, successfully keeping it afloat for more than twenty years. JAF established a practice of making music with clay tiles and has implemented it in school curricula. With local and international support, the collective has opened a terracotta museum and art biennale and hosted spectacular live performances for enraptured audiences. The local governor is considered part of the JAF ecosystem, and indeed, JAF invited him, along with more than forty colleagues and collaborators, to Kassel. To save on costs, since many of them did not receive a per diem, they brought ingredients and cooked for everyone. Cigarette supply was, of course, vital. Economy was on everyone's mind, since the mega-exhibition did not necessarily translate into economic opportunities for the group—most of the budget needed to be spent on production and travel.

Case Study: Dayra

The Palestinian collective The Question of Funding has been working at the intersection of art and economy for some time and seized the opportunity to present Dayra,[2] a community economic model and currency, at documenta fifteen. Meaning "circle" and "circling" in Arabic, Dayra enables individuals, local businesses, and organizations that lack financial resources in fiat currency to exchange material, physical, or intellectual resources denominated in Dayra. An exemplary circulation looks as follows: a graphic designer rents a space from a cultural institution to give a workshop. The cultural institution depends on rent to pay salaries. A farmer takes part in the workshop to enhance their communication abilities but doesn't have money to pay for it. A Dayra is minted by the cultural institution and validated by the graphic designer, and another is minted

by the graphic designer and validated by the farmer. The crediting and debiting will be done using blockchain technology, provided that both the participating parties involved verify the transaction. Like many blockchain-based social initiatives,[3] Dayra reconnects the on-chain with the off-chain world.

Thus, Dayra creates a monetary supply in places where there is no liquidity. Like other complementary community currency proposals, the focal point is to juxtapose the economy of abundance with that of scarcity, the richness of social relations, skills, and offers with that of marketization and commodification. There is evidence that, by restricting the purchasing power of money locally, community currency encourages local exchange and circulation of economic and social activities, thereby boosting local economies and solidarity, while incentivizing ecological practices of production and consumption.[4] The issuance is not dictated by a central bank or a similar authority, but protocolized peer-to-peer.

When the system starts working, it will need to be adjusted to situations arising from concrete use cases. How can the equivalency-formation process work beyond the mere measurement unit of time?[5] Should there be a demurrage mechanism to promote circulation[6]? Does the complementary community currency have the ambition to be used to secure essential goods and services, or does it overly rely on consumer transactions[7]? Translocal operations, so central to art's current business model, remain a challenge to translate into exchange mechanism design, given there are few good examples of exchanging local currencies so that they scale up to become a viable ecology of currencies, despite theoretical proposals.[8]

In any case, Dayra presents a viable alternative currency design that creates full circles of exchange and enfolds adjacent sectors and forms of value production in its circles. It also creates a tangible and meaningful way for artistic and cultural production to spill over into other sectors such as food distribution. As is the case with other alternative currencies, the decisive test will be whether it achieves wide adoption.

Case Study: BeeCoin

BeeCoin,[9] also referred to as BeeDAO, is a project borne out of a collaboration between KW Berlin and ZK/U. As with the Dayra project, what was presented at documenta was primarily an artistic (re-)rendering of the larger work which exists on the blockchain. The BeeCoin project works together with Hiveeyes, who develop monitoring toolkits for beekeepers. BeeCoin is conceptualized as a way of linking the real-time monitoring data of beehives to tokens on the blockchain to attach economic value to the well-being of bees. However, throughout the process of development, BeeCoin has been moving further away from the initial concept of a currency and autonomous economic system, focusing more on the aspect of the BeeDAO as an organizational tool for environmentalist activism (which currently is maintained by human, hence hDAO). Consequently, the BeeCoin as an economic token has all but disappeared from the project's public self-presentations. Instead, there exist so-called beeholder NFTs that act as membership tokens which allow the owners to make proposals and vote on decisions made in the BeeDAO. In addition to human members, beehives hooked up to Hiveeyes monitoring systems can become part of the DAO, with their beekeepers acting as representatives. The activities of BeeDAO are financed by the revenue generated from selling NFT memberships which thus functionally become one-time donations collected in "the Pot." The Pot funds proposals such as improving local ecosystems for bees, expanding to include more beekeeping territories, and system overhauls.

This funding model results in a liquidity problem running through the system and limits its scalability beyond those willing to take active part in the DAO by purchasing a NFT. This reliance on goodwill seed money limits the pool of funding but hedges the project against potential charges of an "economization of nature"—as well as against the dangers of volatile speculation that comes with tokens becoming assets on a secondary market. Surely, there is much greenwashing in the financial sector. But can there be ethical money beyond the shallow pockets of our own savings? The regenerative fund designed by Curve Labs[10] is more daring in this regard. They propose a scheme that tokenizes the natural capital of Posidonia, a kind of Neptune grass occupying and stabilizing the seabed in the southeast of France. One GeoNFT is assigned to each Posidonia meadow and reef, and sales of the fractured tokens go into the Regen Fund to be used for regeneration and maintenance. Hence, a token's value increasing means better ecological conditions (but not the other way around). On top of this, there is an ecological state token which is used as collateral in a reserve, a Decentralized Exchange Trading System that manages a complementary community currency. Since the locals are stewards of the material ecosystem, they have a stake in its wellbeing and are hence rewarded with the community currency, which can be used for daily exchange in local goods and services. The double-loop structure connecting both the tech and financial layers, with its decentralized governance, with the material and social strata makes this design one of the most interesting and potentially viable proposals in the Green DAO space.

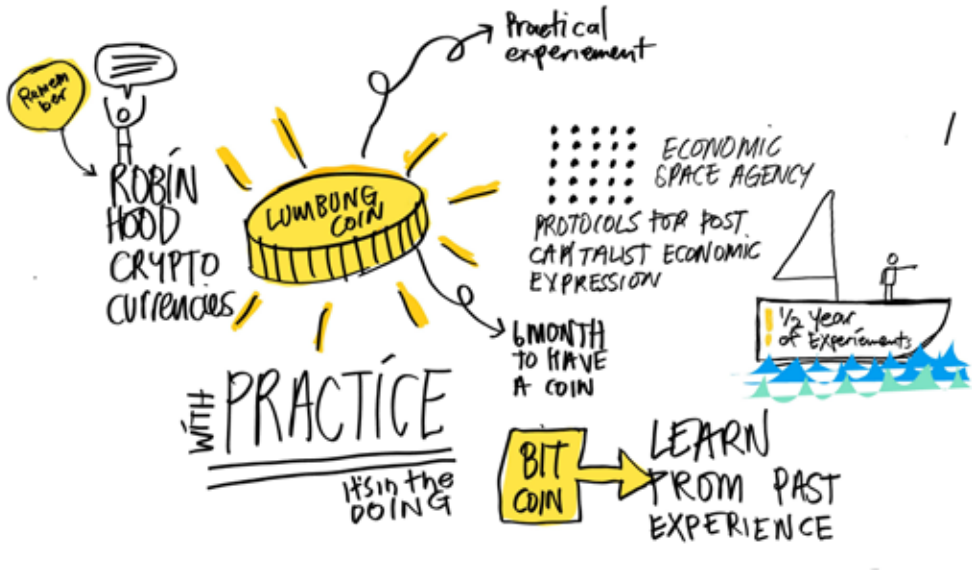
One may wonder why the scheme relies solely on private pledges through sales, rather than tapping into governmental funding sources that back the fund when the ecosystem is in better condition, especially in a field where public and private interests align. This may be counterintuitive for the green-minded crypto anarcho-libertarians. For those who are not, there is equally something counterintuitive: in the interest of raising capital for and incentivizing practices of natural protection, some forms of "quantification," or for lack of a better word, self-justification might be necessary. This is a challenge art practitioners will have to find ways to face, which I will come back to later.

Case Study: lumbung Coin

Compared to Dayra and Beecoin, the aborted lumbung coin was patently more artistic and poetic.[11] Its point of departure is the issuance of other values, not harmonized to price and not even to a single denomination. Originally, it was going to add an economic layer to each of the groups at documenta fifteen that they could define for themselves. Each group, if they so chose, could organize this economy in their own manner, and disperse a kind of token and include anyone they wished in their "economy," whether audience, volunteers, or the wider economy beyond documenta.

This could prefigure a radical future, in the philosophical musings of Jonathan Beller, one of the group's associates, in which "we receive liquidity over the same medium we use to communicate; we receive it from our trust-worthy network of peers, who will share stake in our activities as we share stake in theirs."[12] The techno-economic-poetics clearly draws on the abundance of affects and the generosity of gifts. Yet, without steadfast uptake beyond the art circle, not to mention real assets backing the currency or viable routes of circulation, what remains of the coin for now would be its souvenir quality.

Not all the art world's problems can be undone by currency designs. Most of the time, it takes grounded practices of feminist and solidarity-based economies. Various artistic initiatives participating in documenta fifteen can be read as enacting such diverse



documenta fifteen: lumbung Coin, Harvest from Abdul Dube, 2021.
Source: https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-currency/.

economies, by working on maintaining and replenishing natural and cultural commons, by learning from cooperative governance structures, and by engaging in solidarity-based distribution mechanisms. These are propositions for "taking back the economy"[13] in situated local contexts.

Yet, as much as it is galvanizing, vigilance is also in good order. Studies have shown how "social surplus," or community resilience that traditionally provides mutual aid in underprivileged parts of the world, can be co-opted by financiers issuing micro-debt and using the very communal network for policing and shaming those failing to repay the debt.[14] It is not a pessimistic outcry, but a reality check to confirm that these community prototypes essentially function "off the radar" from the predatory logic of capitalism.

Here is a change of perspective: Why do there appear to be moral obligations in the art world that impede one from thinking big and systemically? In coming up with community currency designs, "small is beautiful" may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The last thing anyone should want is for a funder to look at "grassroot resilience," i.e., the communal safety net, and say, "Well, you are doing just fine, and we don't need to give you funding anymore." This may yet be forthcoming in the Global North funding ecosystem, but if we are to draw a balance of demands from neoliberal NGO funding in the Global South, it is already a bitter pill some art initiatives must swallow.[15]

Nathan Schneider, one of the foremost advocates for cooperative movements and platform cooperativism, sees a need for cooperatives to be entrepreneurial, that is, to identify needs where they arise and be good at responding to them.[16] The counter-intuitive is not too bad to start with. As Common Coin proponents Tiziana Terranova and Andrea Fumagalli argue, financialization has a potential to "reveal how money can function as an intervention and that it can also account for different ways of organizing the production and distribution of wealth."[17] In the art world, this could translate into how we could create conditions for ethical and sustainable funding streams.

From "Another World Is Possible" to "Another Speculation Is Possible"

The political core of documenta fifteen, relative to its aesthetic throwback to anti-globalization movements, is the subject of another debate.[18] However much we may lament it, it appears that "another world is possible" has lost traction. More recently, "another speculation is possible" has emerged as a potential demand that captures the imagination of the disenfranchised today. Philosopher Michel Feher reminds us that we are all "investees" in financial capitalism, where our endeavors are rated as assets in a scale of creditworthiness to be invested in, more than our labor being priced as commodities. This leads to "investee activism" as an avenue for counter-speculative resistance organizing that appropriates the credit dispensation of financial capitalism.[19] The Debt Collective is a prime example, where a "union" of debtors leverage their collective bargaining power to cancel debt.

We can formulate our demand emphatically as how to socialize finance, instead of financializing the social. What can we do in the arts beyond "reproducing the means of production" of the same art world over and over again? Can we project the fictionality of art, so infrastructural to its own existence,[20] onto the real—i.e., real money, real policies, real social institutions?

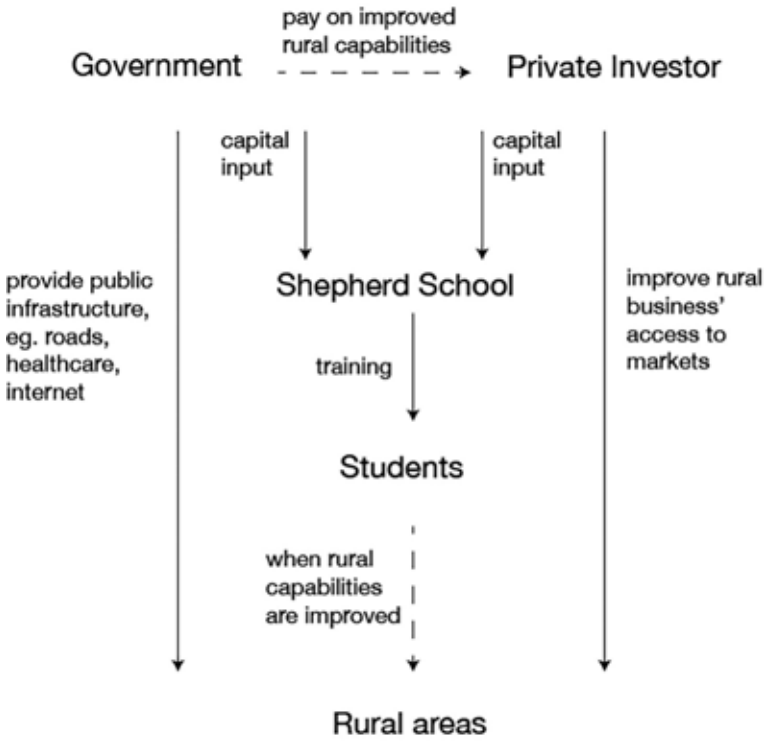
Case Study: Inland

The documenta fifteen lumbung member Inland is a case in point. Inland, an art and agriculture initiative based in Spain, advises the EU on the use of art for rural development policies while facilitating shepherds' and nomadic peoples' movements. It is also reconstructing an abandoned village for collective artistic and agricultural production. Over the years, they have set up a Shepherds School and a multidisciplinary syllabus shedding light on the relationship between art, farmers' know-how and agro-ecology. To highlight how their practice aligns with larger public and private interests, my colleague Vienne Chan and I have designed a Social and Environmental Investment Plan to create sustainable funding for the Shepherds School.

In this scheme, a financial mechanism is proposed in which the private sector's investments are given a public mission direction through Inland's projects and are paid back by the government upon successful development of these missions. Using Shepherds School as a case study, we are developing a holistic approach based on measuring capabilities in which the private sector, the government, and Shepherds School are given defined roles beyond monetary contribution.

Some are right to notice that this investment plan is a creative development based on the cogent analysis of Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) made by Emily Rosamond.[21] While there has been much literature critiquing impact investment, Rosamond is visionary in pointing out the insinuation of impact investment in the art world, whereby the "investor" is a speculative one, i.e., professionals who participate in the discourse-making and partake in the symbolic value chain of the artworld. Rather than taking the "financialized social" as a starting point to see how the geometry is reproduced in the artworld—which is largely given—our interest is how to make realizable alliances of social actors beyond the art world.

The Inland scheme thus differs both from the speculative reading of SIBs and conventional financing that relies purely on monetary supply for results. We make a case for capability development to examine how private investment can reinforce governmental efforts beyond financial contributions. Capability is a term in human development studies in which what individuals are capable of is a combination of skill sets and



Inland, Vienne Chan, and Mi You, Social and Environmental Investment Plan, 2022.

social conditions, suggesting that social competencies are important for individual flourishing.[22] Therefore, successful rural development occurs through training people to live and work in rural areas, as much as the conditions for revenue and access to health care in rural areas. Previous policies that attempted to increase a specific area's population have met with little success. There has been the suggestion that policies should be oriented towards capability building, so that people feel they can live wherever they want, an approach that also respects people's freedom of movement.[23]

Shepherds School contributes to increasing capabilities through education in modern sustainable farming techniques, understanding of ecological landscape and its management, motivation and resilience through learning techniques, and fostering a community interested in rural areas. With its pre-existing network, the private sector can be in a better position than the government to develop a supportive network and access to markets for sustainable goods. For example, Babaà, a clothing company and current investor in Shepherds School, procures wool from the School, providing a path to both ecologically and financially sustainable businesses and the diversification of employment in rural regions.

The proposed design acts as a subtle form of investee activism by attending to the missing social dimension in the debtor-creditor relation of SIBs. It aims to leverage the network from the private sector beyond a pure logic of money and channel governmental funding from non-art sectors for long-term art and cultural practice. Investors whose rationale is beyond mere investment returns can and should be engaged in the process of increasing the capabilities of the community in question. In the larger scheme of things, this may prepare the ground for a more mission-oriented and strategic embedding of artists in society: artists can act as brokers between private and public interests and create communication channels where these interests do align.

Measurement of Impact

The metrics are the most contentious element in impact investment, through which social returns are financialized.[24] Shepherds School is conducting sessions with its alumni using Narrative Practice, a counseling technique that places individuals as experts in their lives, and through conversations help people identify their skills and examine issues within the social structures of dominant discourse.[25] Through Narrative Practice, there will be a better understanding of how students' capabilities have changed with the program and what obstacles remain, identifying conditions to be improved through intervention from the government or the private sector. From these sessions, the School will develop a methodology for the uniqueness of rural development and its challenges, which can be used to measure the new financing program's success.

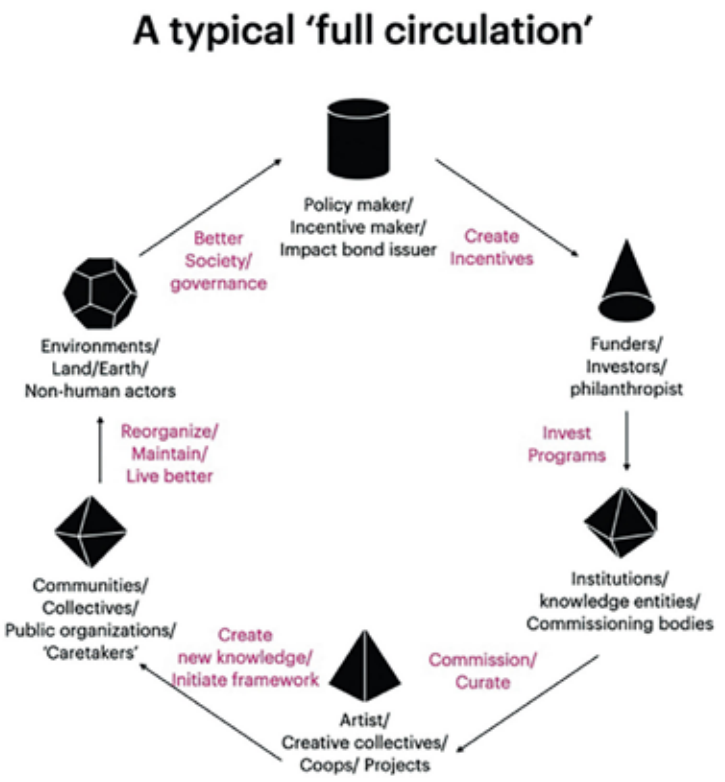
No doubt, to cement the elusive power of art as impact is itself a form of reductionism. But just because governmental agencies readily cast creative workers as de facto social workers tackling social issues[26] doesn't mean we art and cultural workers should shy away from articulating the social relevance of what we do in nuanced ways. If anything, we should preemptively answer these questions before they are demanded of us in the future, given the already strained cultural funding.

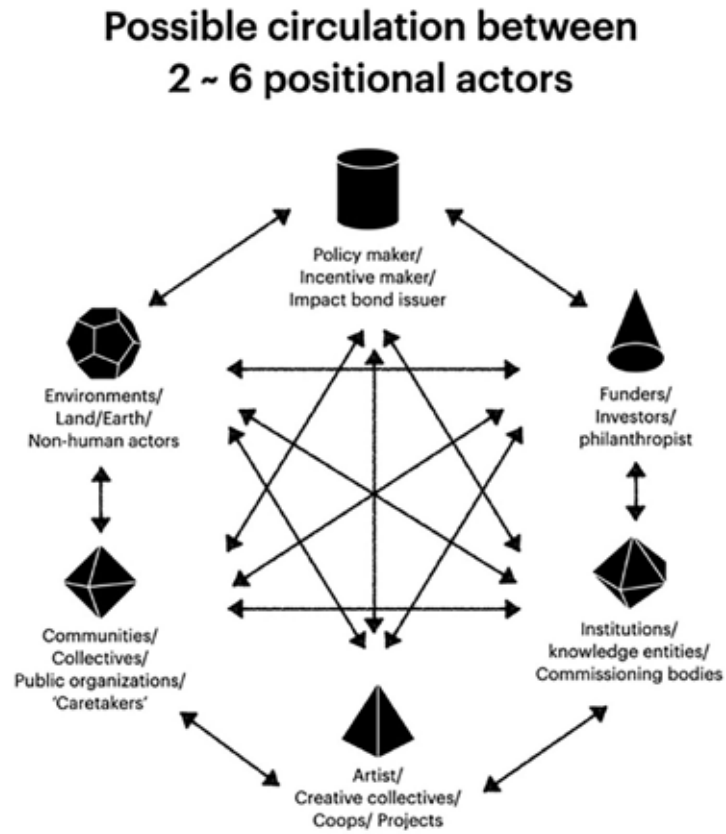
To be sure, quantification is not an evil to be eliminated, but a tool to be used for left-wing politics. The tools found in social network analysis, agent-based modeling, big data analytics, and non-equilibrium economic models are "necessary cognitive mediators" for understanding complex systems of the modern economy and subsequently acting upon them.[27] Similarly, for investee activism, the reign of credit is not a curse to reverse but a challenge to meet: what ultimately matters is who gets credit, and for what.

Funding for Art 2.0

In order to develop a sustainable funding system beyond individual efforts, we need to go upstream. Some funders have started reflecting on their stakes in the ecosystem and strive to create more enabling environments.[28] One recent proposal, the commons.art ecosystem (2022-2023)[29] co-initiated by Binna Choi and Aiwen Yin, ventures a system-wide reconfiguration to instigate a sustainable economy for socially engaged art. It does so through the lens of "maintenance" as a means of (re)production, which entails maintaining an artistic idea, a project, or a piece of artwork by diverse groups of participants over time. This differs from the prevalent productionist model (producing new artworks in each commission) and the preservation model (preserving existing artworks in its initial condition and context), both historically self-sufficient within the enclosed art economies. Socially engaged art presents an inherent paradox: while any social impact requires long-term engagement with a broader societal sector, socially engaged art cannot sustain itself beyond the show business logic predicated on international presentation, biennale-cum-tourism, and productionism. In other words, the inadequacy of socially engaged art is more of a systemic deficit than an individual responsibility. Commons.art strives to include upstream players to design policies for the art and cultural sector. To start, can public funding from education, health, and urban/rural development be shared with long-term art and cultural projects?

Diagram 1 shows a linear chain of funding distribution (usually downward) and of significance (partially upward), typical of socially engaged art projects in the contemporary art world. In contrast, Diagram 2 sketches other possible loops of exchange, funding dispersion, and accountability, if the art funding ecosystem is





Aiwen Yin and commons.art, analytical diagrams of art funding ecosystems, 2022.

diversified. This may help us, as researcher and consultant on cultural policy Jordi Baltà Portolés points out, to move beyond the narrow alleyways of the instrumentalism of art and simple explanations about the power of art, and instead recognize "plural, multidirectional intersections of diverse intensity, and the potential of each actor to interpret different factors, and their confluences, in their own terms."[30]

Let us not shy away from talking about the economy for real. Once we do, the field of social practices in the art cedes to be merely "informal," and we can aspire for such art practices to be sustainable. For that, we need to instill new forms of economies, one speculation at a time.

The author would like to thank Vienne Chan, Aiwen Yin, Binna Choi, and Andreas Niegl for their contributions to the text.

Notes

1 See, for example, Ghalya Saadawi, "Vapid Virtues, Real Stakes," in Between the Material and the Possible, ed. Bassam El Baroni (London: Sternberg Press, 2022); Matthew Poole, "Infrastructure, Ideology, Hegemony," in Between the Material and the Possible, ed. Bassam El Baroni (London: Sternberg Press, 2022).
2 https://dayra.net.
3 For example, the universal basic income project Circles (https://circles.garden), P2P care project ReUnion (https://www.reunionnetwork.org), and distributed cooperative organizations protocol DisCo Coop (https://disco.coop).
4 See, for example, Esther Oliver Sanz, "Community currency (CCs) in Spain: An empirical study of their social effects," Ecological Economics 121 (2016/01/01/ 2016), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2015.11.008, https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921800915004401; Marie Fare and Pepita Ould Ahmed, "Complementary Currency Systems and their Ability to Support Economic and Social Changes," Development and Change 48, no. 5 (2017), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12322, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/dech.12322.
5 See, for example, a comparative study on Polanyi's concept of equivalencies and Appadurai's exchange theory, especially in the context of non-commodity exchange: Rhoda H. Halperin, Cultural Economies Past and Present (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).
6 Margrit Kennedy, Interest and Inflation Free Money (Okemos, MI: Seva International, 1995).
7 Vienne Chan, "Complementary Currency Design Through Debt," Parole (2021), https://www.parole.cc/compendiums/form-follows-finance/complementary-currency-design-through-debt/.
8 See Louis Larue, "The case against alternative currencies," Politics, Philosophy & Economics 21, no. 1 (2022), https://doi.org/10.1177/1470594x211065784, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1470594X211065784.
9 "Beeholder—Beecoin—BeeDAO," https://beedao.zku-berlin.org.
10 Curve Labs, "The Cryptoeconomic Neptune – Regenerative Web3 Design for Posidonia Oceanica," https://blog.curvelabs.eu/the-cryptoeconomic-neptune-a96e3d7d9ff3.
11 It was conceived with the Economic Space Agency, and a residue of it could be seen in the sketch. ECSA partially grew out of the Robin Hood Cooperative, a hedge fund that uses the profit it generates from financial markets to support commons projects.
12 Jonathan Beller, "How We Short Capitalism – And Finance the Revolution," Coin-

Desk, September 25, 2020, https://www.coindesk.com/markets/2020/09/25/how-we-short-capitalism-and-finance-the-revolution/.

Beller's earlier work on the correlation between screen cultures and capitalism is illuminating as an analytical precursor to this speculative and activist position. He makes an operational reading of images in films and screen cultures and links the deterritorialization of words and actual work as a form of movement of financialization into media of expression. See Jonathan Beller, *Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (Lebanon: Dartmouth College Press, 2006). The task on hand then, is to reclaim the expressive power as a form of value in itself.

13 J. K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron, and Stephen Healy, Take Back the Economy An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013). http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt32bcgj.

14 Silvia Federici, "From Commoning to Debt: Financialization, Microcredit, and the Changing Architecture of Capital Accumulation," South Atlantic Quarterly 113, no. 2 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2643585, https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2643585.

15 See, for example, Justin Malachowski's study on documenta fifteen member El Warcha. Justin Malachowski, "Staging Arts in the Historic City: Development Funding, Social Media Images, and Tunisia's Contemporary Public Art Scene," Journal of City and Society (forthcoming).

16 Nathan Schneider, From Platform Coops to Exit to Community— with Nathan Schneider, podcast audio, Boundaryless, June 14, 2021, https://stories.platformdesigntoolkit.com/from-platform-coops-to-exit-to-community-with-nathan-schneider-f16456db3ca4.

17 Tiziana Terranova and Andrea Fumagalli, "Financial Capital and the Money of the Common: The Case of Commoncoin," in MoneyLab Reader – An Intervention in Digital Economy, eds. Geert Lovink, Nathaniel Tkacz, and Patricia De Vries (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2015).

18 See the author's commentary on documenta fifteen, Mi You, "What Politics? What Aesthetics? Reflections on documenta fifteen," e-flux 131 (2022).

19 Michel Feher, Rated Agency: Investee Politics in a Speculative Age (New York: Zone Books, 2018).

20 Poole, "Infrastructure, Ideology, Hegemony."

21 Emily Rosamond, "Shared Stakes, Distributed Investment: Socially Engaged Art and the Financialization of Social Impact," Finance and Society 2, no. 2 (2016): 111-126.

22 Frances Stewart, "Capabilities and Human Development: Beyond the Individual – The Critical Role of Social Institutions and Social Competencies," UNDP Human Development Report Office Occasional Papers Series 3 (2013).

23 Vicente Pinilla and Luis Antonio Sáez-Pérez, "What Do Public Policies Teach Us About Rural Depopulation: The Case Study of Spain," European Countryside 13, no. 2 (2021): 330-351.

24 See, for example, Eve Chiapello, "Financialisation of Valuation," Human Studies 38, no. 1 (March 2015), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-014-9337-x, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-014-9337-x.

25 This corresponds to a recent development whereby therapy is deployed as a form of organizational development, which helps to forms consciousness around certain issues and directions in a more complex way than the forthright and goal-driven work of consultancy. See, for example, the session "How can habitability be measured?" at "Where is the Planetary" event at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, facilitated by Gary Zhexi Zhang and therapist Larissa Lourie, on October 15, 2022: https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/veranstaltung/p_216951.php.

26 See for example, Ana Alacovska, "From Passion to Compassion: A Caring Inquiry into Creative Work as Socially Engaged Art," Sociology 54, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520904716, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0038038520904716; Jen Harvie, Fair Play – Art, Performance and Neoliberalism (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Claire Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship (London: Verso, 2012).
27 Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, "#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics," Critical Legal Thinking (May 2013).
28 See, for example, the research project Forces of Art initiated by the Prince Claus Fund, Hivos, and the European Cultural Foundation, which resulted in the eponymous publication and a series of learning sessions with funders and researchers.
29 https://www.commons.art.
30 Jordi Baltà Portolés, "When Art Opens Spaces of Possibilities: Policies, Tensions, and Opportunities," in Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World, eds. Carin Kuoni et al. (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020), 22.

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Whither the Exhibition in the Age of Finance? Notes towards a Curatorial Practice of Leveraging

Bassam El Baroni

Those of us who came of age in the 1990s, early 2000s, or the decades preceding them are likely to be sensitive to the gradual rise of a whole list of terms and vocabularies that have now firmly entered our daily lexicon from the world of finance. Language is always in a state of continuous give and take with its societal conditions of possibility, so the elevation of financial lingo and demotion of terms that might not make a lot of sense in a financialized world simply reflects linguistic transformation in living languages. When we speak of the speculative in the field of art, artistic research and curating we are not only alluding to a range of influential philosophies that have had strong impact on the field, but we also have in mind a particular mode of thinking and doing that is marked by a "cognitive provisionality" that "draws its specific energy from the premodern world of irrational reckoning and risk-taking, origins that we can still discern today."[1]

We can still recognize this ancient speculative energy because while it may have evolved past the unearthly and the paranormal, its general characteristics are still potent ingredients of financial speculation. As cultural workers, artists, curators, and art academicians we operate within an entrepreneurial economy that is designed to reward entrepreneurial alertness. This form of alertness manifests itself in speed (to be faster than others, to put one's ideas out there quickly) and in the spontaneous and nimble learning prized above the methodical within the entrepreneurial mindset.[2] As observed by sociologist Ulrich Bröckling, "[e]ntrepreneurial activity begins precisely where cost-benefit calculation stops and new possibilities for profit are discovered and exploited for the first time."[3]

This is precisely the point of inception for both literal financial speculation and for the type of speculative practices that the expanded field of art is preoccupied with irrelevant of whether an immediate profit is turned or not. This is because - as philosopher Michel Feher has pointed out - contemporary subjects shaped by the logic of financialization ought to be primarily understood as project-bearers whose profit is tied to a rationale of appreciation (the increase in the value of an asset over time) and more pressingly, the constant need to avoid the depreciation of their resources.[4] And in the case of art and curation, these resources are the subject's creativity, artistic competencies, networks, flexibility, and connections. Successful speculation is the generator of returns whether these take the form of immediate monetary profit or an increase in the value of a cultural operator's assets and thus their own appreciation as actors in the field. The structural isomorphism between forms of labour and subjectivity on the one hand and formulae of speculation have made the speculative synonymous with production and what it means to be productive.[5] It could be argued that over the years speculation has slowly populated the space once given to terms and concepts significant to the field, such as 'agency' and 'critique', in the end eclipsing them in contempo-

rary discourse. Yet, as artist Jonas Staal rightly suggests, this presents an affordance to art workers, since speculation is as much part of the answer to the manifold crises impacting the world as it is a contributor to them, speculation already occupies a spot in "what we can term the radical imaginary of both politics and art."[6]

As emphasized in the editorial statement of this publication, the proliferation of other worlds, fabulatory futures, and a renewed emphasis on worldmaking all somewhat attest to a shift in perspective within the field towards such an imaginary. What they underline is a newfound embrace of fictioning as central to the construction of transformative programmes. But how and why did this recent adoption of the power of the fictive emerge? One may point to an array of possibilities including the persuasiveness of speculative materialist philosophy or, the apparent diminishing gap between 'real' and 'fake' driven by computation. But while these may indeed be factors, an equally convincing argument is that – since the 2008 financial crash and its subsequent bail-outs – we have bore witness to what we might call the *denaturalization of capitalism*. In simplified terms, this is the idea that contra neoclassic and Marxist economic theories, capital is not wedded to some ecologically inspired idea of equilibrium whereby imbalances between 'fictitious capital' and the real material processes that produce it can eventually come to rest before once again being disrupted. Quite the opposite, as Colin Drumm aptly explains, we need:

> *[T]o see monetary systems as characterized by a strategic disequilibrium rather than by a hydraulic equilibrium, as in the traditional theories. Most theories of money conceive of the monetary system as something like a bathtub, with various tubes connecting different parts of it. If you add water into one part, the water level will settle until it reaches equilibrium. Similarly, according to this way of thinking, if you create more money while the amount of goods and services which this money presumably represents remains constant, then the value of the money must settle through a process of inflation until it returns to an equilibrium. There is a relation of equilibrium between the real and the fictitious, which becomes upset by the over-production of the fictitious, and which therefore rectifies itself again through inflation. The impression produced by this way of thinking is that money is, ultimately, a sterile medium, which exerts no causal effects of its own on what it signifies [...].*[7]

There exists a link between the seemingly unopposed power of the fictitious in present-day capital and recent practices of *fictioning* and *futuring* within the expanded field of art. With this, art implicitly acknowledges that money is a potent medium and embraces its destabilizing speculative spirit and potential for the creative reordering of the social fabric. Once the burden of equilibrium between fiction and real has been dropped, the arena of speculations and counter-speculations emerges as the space where various social injustices and inequalities can be challenged by constructing and interjecting worlds that reveal prejudices and enact society otherwise, all through the creative processes, artistic competencies and interdisciplinarian ethos many of us are already accustomed to as practitioners in the 21st century. If this sounds too good to be true, that is because it most likely is. The reasons for this are primarily twofold.

Firstly, although fictioning and speculation in recent practices might draw some of their energy and desire to impact from the non-essentialist world of financialized capital, where money may have no or little material essence or foundation, art practices and their pedagogies are still "very much coded by the unchecked relation contemporary art has with the autonomy attributed to the modern space of art."[8] The form and site of the exhibition whether online, in a white cube or in a run-down former factory –

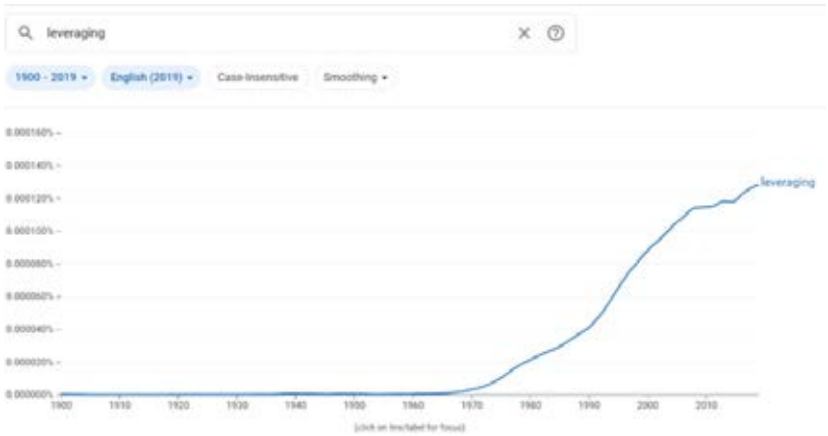
to name a few likely venues - do not seem to be a key factor, what is important is that this 'autonomy' registers as ontological to the field of art. Which is to say that even when this autonomy is challenged, its robustness dictates that it bounces right back and remains a constant. Its familiarity is like a home, reassuring in one sense, but at the same time stifling and claustrophobic as when one is quarantined for too long inside an apartment. Curator and writer Anselm Franke calls this peculiar condition *the ontological quarantine* of the exhibition, and for him it describes a restriction, a limit which takes the form of:

> *[...] a secret contract, a magic circle still inscribed today into institutions of art—the very contract that granted art its relative autonomy, acquired at the price of its worldly consequentiality. Everything that enters into the magic circle has to be removed from the world, removed from direct effect, entering a realm of the merely symbolic, the merely fictional. All objects in the magic circle are given a special ontological status and undergo a process of neutralization through a paradoxical fictionalization.*[9]

According to Franke, it is this secret contract that has endowed art with partial freedom but at the price of its own inconsequentiality.[10] The issue at hand is that while the speculative dimension of recent art and curating may be attributed similar actualizing properties to the non-essentialist fictions of finance capitalism, it is still predominately tethered to what may be considered an essentialist 'magic circle' or 'secret contract'. This contract appears to be highly resolute and so engraved into the institution of art that it is hard to imagine such hyperstitional fictions having causal effects and constituting themselves as realities in a wider social framework. Some questions we may consider then are: how can we rethink the exhibition considering this contract's persistence with the view to optimizing the exhibition's speculative potency? What kind of critical thinking can exhibitions that address our financialized world help materialize, and how can these manifestations extend to multiple networks?

Secondly, whilst artistic practices that embrace future oriented approaches to world-making are actively speculating, what is often overlooked is that for speculations 'to come true' there is a necessary condition that needs to be satisfied. Simply stated, this is the other half of speculation, it is called *leveraging*. Speculation is an approximately 2500-year-old term that has existed long before financial speculation, leverage on the other hand is so intertwined with finance capitalism that it is an intrinsic part of contemporary subjectivity, as Leigh Claire La Berge puts it "[t]o be a creature of modernity, one is forced to leverage what one has. One can't recuse oneself from leveraging. One cannot get outside of a leveraged world."[11] Leveraging is a form of strategizing around the limits of our knowledge in a world where uncertainty and contingency are constants, it augments speculation by engineering a change of perspective in those around us "from one that would predict the future to one that aims to make investments that will bend the production of the future around one's own position."[12] Leveraging entails that an effort is made to position oneself or one's project as some sort of hub around which speculations can revolve and evolve. It is the art of inducing social, cultural, political, emotional, and economic investment by making one's conditions of possibility in effect double as the conditions of possibility for others.[13] The most succinct formulation of leveraging appears in the writing of political economist Martijn Konings when he describes it as:

> *[T]he way we aim to give our fictitious projections a self-fulfilling, performative quality, how we seek to provoke the world into affirmatively responding to our speculative claims, to recruit the labor that will ensure their validation.*[14]



Usage of the word 'leveraging' has skyrocketed over the past 50 years mirroring the rise of financialization. Source: Google

The *speculative paradox* in the field of art is the appealing and persuasive idea that we can simply speculate fictions into becoming factual by imagining them, picturing them, and modelling them but without ever having to do the equally creative work of leveraging, strategic planning, setting up, convincing, and provoking that will eventually grant these speculations the quality of a prophecy. This paradox is almost too convenient for exhibitionary practices that seek to capitalize on the themes of other worlds and/or alternative futures while remaining within the safe confines of the non-causal magic circle. It can no longer be claimed that art lacks the socio-political impetus, technologies, and methodologies to imagine the future, even futures wildly alien to our current sensibilities. The question regarding art's political imagination is not whether it lacks creativity but whether it is willing to consider leveraging as an integral part of its speculative agency.

Revisiting the work of anthropologist Alfred Gell (1945 – 1997) may provide some primary cues that can bring us closer to *a curatorial practice of leveraging* in which exhibitions, art objects, and images have a significant role to play. This is to reconsider and recontextualize his so-called 'action-centred approach' to art for a post-financialized world. Gell's core idea is that art – for this argument's purpose let us say this art comes in the form of a curated exhibition – should not be discussed as a scheme of symbols and meanings. He calls this scheme 'the semiotic approach', exhibitions based on this approach would be engaged with "the interpretation of objects 'as if' they were texts."[15] Contra the emphasis on symbolic communication – which is also the exact same restriction imposed on the exhibition in the magic circle – Gell places "all the emphasis on *agency*, *intention*, *causation*, *result* and *transformation*."[16] For Gell, art is "a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it."[17]

This means that action-centred exhibitions are concerned with the effective role 'art objects' can play in social processes instead of reifying their symbolisms. Gell's essay *Vogel's Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps* (1996) is an articulate defence of why animal traps - developed for hunting - ought to be considered artworks; overcoming the distinction artefact/artwork that some of his contemporaries used to set boundaries for what artworks can and cannot be.[18] Gell articulates the significance of exhibiting traps and approaching them as artworks when he observes that these sophisticated devices embody ideas and transmit meanings precisely because they are "transformed representations" of the "mutual relationship" between the trap-makers and the captured animals. For Gell, traps use "material forms and mechanisms" to convey

"the idea of a nexus of intentionalities" between the trap-makers and the animals caught. With this Gell delivers the crux of his argument when he states that:

> *[T]his evocation of complex intentionalities is in fact what* serves *to define art-works, and that suitably framed, animal traps could be made to evoke complex intuitions of being, otherness, relatedness.*[19]

Mariana Castillo Deball, *Vogel's Net*, 2013. This work is a replica of the Zande hunting net that was the starting point of Alfred Gell's essay on art and traps. The original was displayed in a similar style at the exhibition *Art/artifact* curated by Susan Vogel at the Center of African Art, New York, 1988. Dimensions: 90 × 45 × 30 cm. Courtesy: Gallery Wien Lukatsch, Berlin Photo: Andy Keate.

Taking into consideration the clear differences between human-human and human-more-than-human relationships, the trap can be understood as a crystallization of intentionalities, an object that anticipates probability to give rise to actions, and a relational model that analyses and concretizes the abstract relations between beings. Thus, we find in traps speculation and leveraging combined into one form. Traps move from the speculative state of cognitive provisionality towards an end, they are not fantasies about other worlds or fabulative futures, they are rooted in knowledge of the processes, interactivity between things, and conditions that furnish their context. If the trap is a type of action-centred art object, then in today's digitized and financialized context, traps and the cognitive patterns that produce them exist as digital objects[20] and financial objects[21], which is to say that in traps we can trace a particular type of creativity that for better or worse permeates human action. If we accept the hypothesis that behind the upsurge in the multiple artistic and curatorial practices of fictioning and worldmaking is an underexplored relation to the over-production of the fictitious in financialized capitalism, and an embrace of fiction as a direct route to the transformation of the social sphere. Then for these fictions and speculative imaginaries to be considered action-centred, as opposed to semiotic assemblages, a shift must occur from positing an agenda by imagining the world otherwise, to actioning that agenda by capturing a world and translating it into a set of organisational processes that can exist outside of the inconsequentiality of the exhibition space.[22] The 21st century action-centred exhibition is the proposition that for exhibitions to play an active role in 'acts of political imagination' they must exceed imagination by embedding concrete knowledge of leveraging into representation. In this manner, exhibitions can be the representational vehicles within a larger constellation of interconnected practices and formats that may include assemblies, working groups, online platforms and community organizing.

As Victoria Ivanova has recently argued the "rejectionist critique of financial logics at the front-end [of the art sphere]" i.e., the public face of the institution of art (museums, art academia, biennials etc.) "has only helped consolidate financial integration of the contemporary art sphere into the larger operational financial status quo at the back-end" i.e., (markets, tax free offshore art storage facilities, the rise of so called hedge-fund collectors and the ascendency of art as an alternative asset class).[23] Therefore, the action-centred proposition and its curatorial practice of leveraging rebuts the implicit idea that art practice is necessarily corrupted by entering the space of economics and finance, since we have already established the complex nexus that knots speculative worldmaking with speculative finance. Financial objects and their mechanisms are an emerging field of research for a growing number of artists, curators, collectives, and artistic researchers.[24] The key question underpinning this relatively new direction is how to enter the socio-psychological arena of finance to gain leverage *over* and *through* their own assets? Which is to say, the purpose is to establish new norms from within an extended sphere of finance.

Vermeir & Heiremans, *A Modest Proposal (in a Black Box),* 2018, is a work - originally developed for the Pump House Gallery, London - that investigates how the financialization of public art collections, museum real estate, and symbolic capital could be used to generate a more equitable arts ecology. The image here is of the work as installed in the group exhibition *Infrahauntologies* curated by Bassam El Baroni, July 8–October 3, 2021, at Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, Oldenburg, Germany. Courtesy: the artists.

This is because as Koning's reminds us "[n]orms work not by governing actors from the outside but through the ways actors enlist others in operations that create a new system-level dynamic."[25] The exhibition still has a part to play in this approach since it is a space for crystallizing intentionalities, a site in which the speculative and imaginative competencies of art can fuse with its newfound interest in leveraging, and an interval in which leverage is ingrained into the tactical propositions, prototyping approaches, and speculative fictions of art objects.

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otherwise." The terminology is general and can stretch to include objects such as trades and marketplaces to the ubiquitous credit-score to financial instruments such as stocks, bonds, shares, futures, and options contracts. References: F. Muniesa, D. Chabert, M. Ducrocq-Grondin and SV. Scott. Back-office intricacy: the description of financial objects in an investment bank. Industrial and Corporate Change, Volume 20, Number 4, pp. 1189–1213. Kear, Mark. Playing the credit score game: algorithms, 'positive' data and the personification of financial objects. Economy and Society. 2018.
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24 To mention just a few among many others: artist duos Vermeir & Heiremans and, João Enxuto and Erica Love; artist and researcher Emily Rosamond; curator, philosopher, and cultural theorist Erik Bordeleau; artist and researcher Bahar Noorizadeh; artist and researcher Gerald Nestler; theorist Suhail Malik; platforms such as Weird Economies (WE) and the older Economic Space Agency.
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"Plumbing the System" at the Dutch Pavilion Interview with Aric Chen, Jan Jongert / Superuse, Carlijn Kingma

by Ronald Kolb, Shwetal A. Patel, Dorothee Richter

OnCurating (Ronald Kolb, Shwetal A. Patel, Dorothee Richter): Can you explain the concept that inspired your project at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2023?

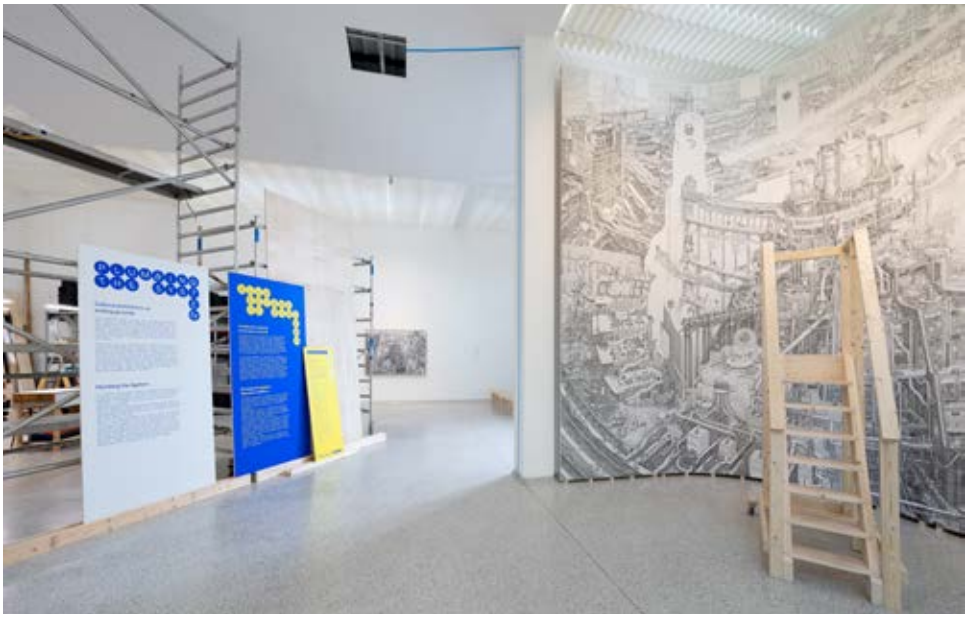
Aric Chen: I would like to start by giving a little background and context. To be honest, and this is a long story, we got started on this year's pavilion a bit late. But what we had already started was an ongoing collaboration with the *Stimuleringsfonds*—the Creative Industries Fund NL—on a research project. This research project looked at the flows of materials, people, and labor that pass through the Biennale and was related to a broader initiative called *The Green Lion* by a number of pavilions that had joined together to look at ways to make the Biennale itself more sustainable and reduce its environmental impact.
In this context, we thought we should build on this research and also use the pavilion as a way to advance our institutional agenda of providing not only a platform for discussion, debate, and presentation, but also a testing ground for the implementation of ideas. In this atmosphere of striving to make the Biennale itself more circular and sustainable, all roads led to Jan Jongert of Superuse as curator of the pavilion. Perhaps Jan can take it from here.

Jan Jongert: Long before the Venice pavilion, Superuse was able to conduct research and develop an approach to a circular and sustainable way of working in the practice of architecture. This research led to the realization that the economy itself is something that hinders the continuous sustainable development of design and architecture. Investigating the financing processes and the economics behind them was definitely one of the most important topics for me to show in the pavilion. Since Carlijn Kingma had just finished her series of drawings, *The Waterworks of Our Economy*, illustrating how dysfunctional our economy is, I thought it was important to show these works. And at the same time, it was interesting to see how a flow of money, namely, the investment in the exhibition in the pavilion, can literally be transformed into something that has an immediate impact on the ground. Both of those things led to the idea of taking the resource of water, which is abundant on the site, and showing the lack of value that it creates, and seeing what kind of different values can be created that contribute to the pavilion itself, and the contribution of biodiversity and the use of scarce resources like water.

Dorothee Richter: How was the collaboration with an artist for the pavilion at the Architecture Biennale? In a way, it brings the theme into the representational space beyond architecture and design. What are the challenges and the benefits of such a collaboration? And vice versa, an artist working with architectural themes.

JJ: To briefly introduce Carlijn, she's an architect by training and decided not to design another new building, but to use her skills as an architect and understand systems to draw the reality we live in. She is on the border between art, science, and architecture, I would say...

Carlijn Kingma: As Jan said, I'm actually trained as an architect and still consider myself an architect in the sense that I still make architectural drawings, but I use architecture as a language to think about these issues, like the design of our monetary system, our tax and financial systems, and how that produces certain economic outcomes where we value one over the other. I had known about Jan and Superuse's work for quite some time. And we had been in contact on certain issues before the work on the pavilion. I think that



Plumbing the System, Dutch Pavilion, Venice Architecture Biennial 2023. Photo Cristiano Corte

my work is very much related to Jan's. He is trying to change certain structures to create a more valuable, sustainable, and circular kind of process in architecture. I reflect, through the language of architecture, on the systems that Jan is trying to fight from within. We work in different disciplines, but I think that also makes it very interesting because it adds up rather than competes. It's two completely different skill sets trying to find each other somewhere in the middle.

Shwetal Patel: The Venice Biennale is, of course, very clearly focused on the topic of climate. It wouldn't surprise me if, in the future, the topic of sustainability becomes hotter and hotter in some way, would it?

AC: Literally, yes.

SP: I know, for example, that the German pavilion is using its location this time to go to Venice to refurbish, to renovate, to repair, to understand the local context in Venice as a city, right? And I know that, as you mentioned earlier, you had conversations with some of the other pavilions. Did you feel that those conversations led to agreement on certain things? Were there any results that you felt indicated a closer collaboration and perhaps because these kinds of exercises are highly untenable at first glance? After all, you create these temporary exhibitions for a certain period of the biennial, and people essentially fly in, visit, and then leave. The whole economics behind it is rather paradoxical. I think these exhibitions are extremely important to hopefully help the wayfinders, the practitioners, and the feeling in the field. But are these ongoing discussions?

AC: Yes, absolutely. For me, this biennial is a sign that the wind has changed. I've already mentioned how we've been trying to promote an agenda for cultural institutions as testing grounds, not only as places to talk about and show things, but also as places to do things that the government or commercial sector can't or won't do, right? In a way, cultural institutions occupy, to misuse the term, a third space. We operate in the public sphere but are at least theoretically unencumbered by the same forces, pressures, and agendas that drive and constrain government and the private sector. We can do things for their own sake. That's our job. When we are faced with all these endless crises, the question is whether we can do more with this privileged position. Can we use ourselves as guinea pigs, or our exhibition venues or the systems we belong to, as guinea pigs, to put into practice some of the speculations we develop and present?
In this biennial, we saw that we are not alone in this feeling. I think there was a shared sense that we know what the problems are. We don't need to do much more to raise awareness or ask questions—the kinds of things that cultural events tend to focus on when it comes to all these pressing issues. And so you do have pavilions like the German one that actually acted as a kind of hub for circular practices within the Biennale and Venice. You had the Austrian pavilion that, instead of simply talking about the privatization of public space and the exclusionary nature of events like the Venice Biennale—which excludes many Venetians themselves—, tried to open its pavilion to non-ticket-paying Venetian neighbors on the other side of the Giardini's wall.

To go back to Dorothee's question about the relationship between curator and artist, it was a bit of a special case here because we had a curator (Jan) who is a practitioner himself, commissioning an artist (Carlijn) with a background in practice as a trained architect. Carlijn thinks on a macro level in this pavilion, and Jan works on a micro level, trying to make the connection between these big global concepts and defined local practices—sort of a biennial version of the mantra of thinking globally and acting locally. The fact that we had water as a common metaphor worked well, I thought. Finally, I'd like to point to broader trends in architecture, or at least in exhibiting architecture: when we talk about architecture in the discursive sense today, we no longer think mostly in terms of brick and mortar but instead look at architecture as a manifestation, enabler, mediator, or agent—an articulation and articulator of broader forces at work, broader economic, regulatory, political, social, and cultural forces. When we talk about rethinking the world to address all these crises and urgencies, we need to think about the systems that have brought us to where we are now. In this sense, we invited Jan as a kind of systems thinker, in the context of the Biennale itself as a system of cultural production.

DR: In a way, you made a suggestion for a larger context with the analogy between water and money. It's a very interesting suggestion, but as a metaphor, perhaps a bit difficult. Water is a common good that we should all care about. Would that mean that not only the common good "water" but also, for example, all monetary systems should be shared equitably? Would that be the result of

that thought, or if we look at it from the perspective of art, what does it mean if we look at everything as a commodity?

JJ: The theme of water was the result of the whole process, and of the conversation between me and Carlijn and her team and the Nieuwe Instituut and the other contributors that started collaborating with us. Water was the language that we used after all. In Carlijn's work, it is this powerful metaphor that forces all stakeholders to speak in a completely different way and remake their daily processing. And in our practice, the value of water was physical. Those processes also started to talk to each other. Carlijn, for instance, showed three possible futures of how the economy and the water system could be organized differently, more equally and sustainably. And at the same time, we wanted to find options for how to literally store and value water in this pavilion. The language of water was a very powerful means to develop this narrative.

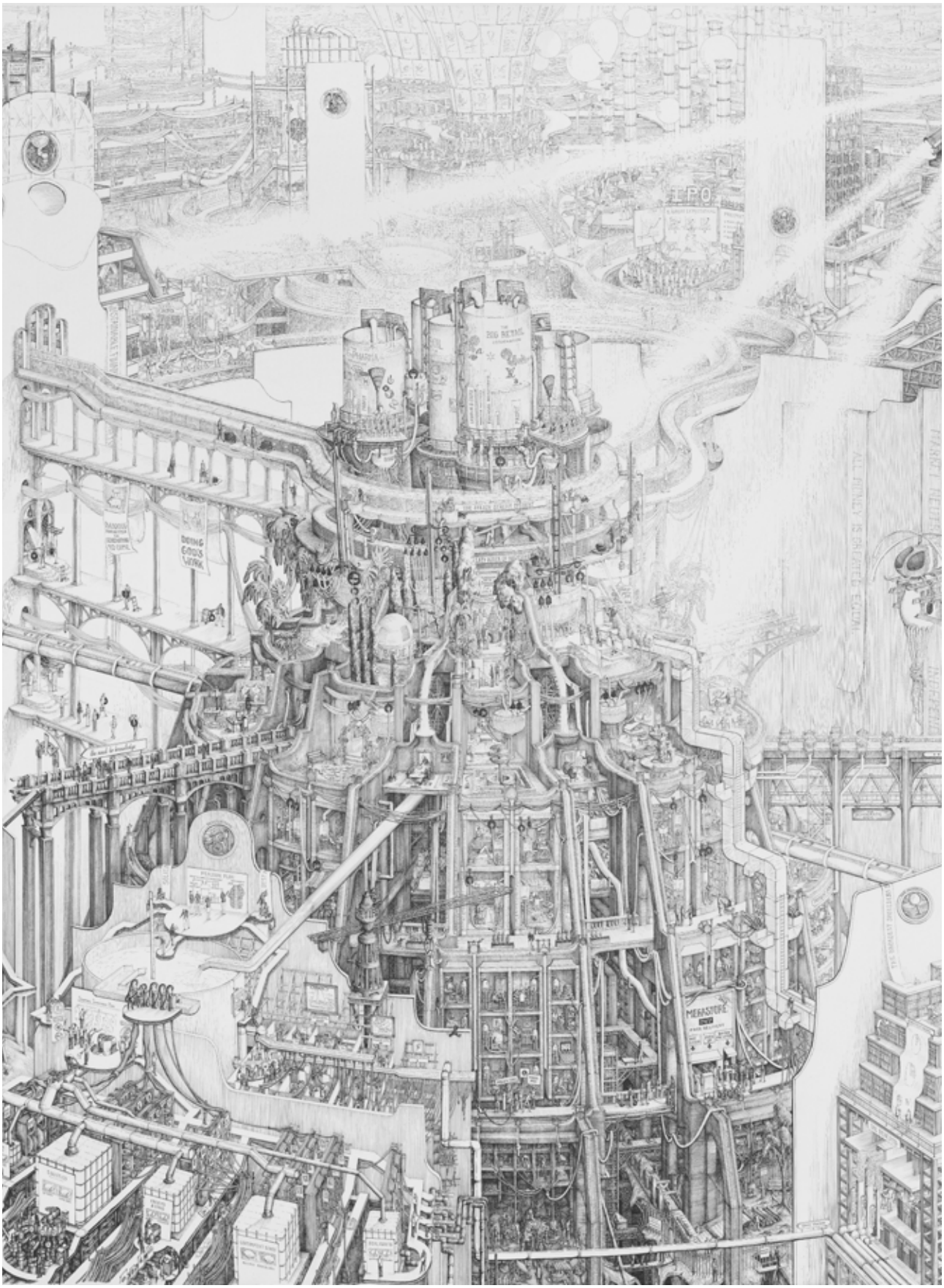
SP: I have a follow-up question about the drawings. I have a bachelor's degree in economics. When I looked at your drawings, Carlijn, I saw a lot of economic functions that you had illustrated. At first, I thought I was looking at the work of an economist because the details were so sophisticated, but there were also things that I didn't recognize and that I didn't associate with financial and monetary flows.
How did you come up with these illustrations of these complex economic systems? Did you work with economists, or do you have a natural interest in economics?

CK: I've been creating these cartographies for a few years now. All the other cartographies I've done have always been in collaboration with journalists or scientists, experts from the private sector or whatever. It's always been about money and funding. When I've done a map on health care or climate change or the history of democracy, it's always ended up being about whether or not there's funding. And that raises the fundamental question, "How do we actually organize ourselves?"
For me, money and our monetary system is actually an agreement. It's not very interesting in itself. It's a stack of paper and bills, but it's more about how we're going to allocate the resources that we have. And who decides that? And that was the reason for me to start this research. I started three years ago researching new grants with a financial journalist and a professor. That was the core team. And to do that, we interviewed everyone involved, in over 200 interviews. I was an artist-in-residence at a bank for a while, where I also did 30 in-depth interviews and made a few meters in sketches and flowcharts, also exploring this metaphor, not just the system, but also the language that we should use.

After all, we chose this metaphor of water because many cartographers in the past have used it. We didn't make it up beforehand. Apart from the fact that it's nice to see that money somehow makes some economic-social processes grow, and if you don't irrigate it, progress seeps away.... It's very much embedded in the language—we talk about frozen assets, assets that can evaporate, trickle-down economics, pooling of assets, liquidity... All of that is already in the metaphor of water.
All of these macro effects always go through all these different institutions, from the pension funds to the banks, to the private equity firms, to the big companies, to the shareholders... It's always a very long chain of actors. And that's what we tried to capture in the drawings.

Ronald Kolb: This translation of the metaphors of waterways into the language of economic transactions is very interesting and revealing. If you want the money to flow your way, you have to understand the system and be able to "manipulate" it. The phrase immediately came to mind: "Water flows uphill toward money!

CK: That is what is at the heart of my research. We have a majority of people in a society in the middle, and you see money trickling down, but more is being pumped up. It's more extractive "pumping up" than "trickling down." At the top, they are "swimming" in money, and at the bottom there is financial "drought" because too much is being extracted. For this reason, we studied the irrigation system. For the drawings, we have elaborated six mechanisms by which you can understand that this irrigation system favors the growth of inequality.
It's also about finding ways that we can implement this in our own practice. Architecture becomes a way to put social issues that we face into action. I think I'm trying to do this also through the language of architecture, making people understand that if we look at this monetary system as an irrigation system of our economy, of our society, and see where we can change it or where we can make even small adjustments, we



The Waterworks of Money by Carlijn Kingma

understand this as an architecture that is not something neutral but is actually the result of agreements that we make together, that is, that can somehow help us make small or big adjustments, depending on the democratic debate....

SP: I wonder if we can apply this thinking to the Venice Biennale itself and the way the Biennale works in the city. The city has 20 million visitors, about half a million come to see the Biennale. That's less than a tenth of a percent, but the kind of economics of the visual arts and architecture biennials together could be an interesting diagram of how the flows of finance and money drive and influence what becomes cultural heritage.

JJ: Actually, we designed a third element for the contribution to the Biennale, which is not visible in the pavilion. It would be the groundwork for such a future project. Last October, in a workshop with students from the Università Iuav di Venezia, the collective Temporiuso and with the participation of other curators and commissioners, we made a list to see where various ingredients for a positive contribution in the areas of housing, work, and food already exist throughout the Venice Lagoon. We've started mapping those ingredients, and we're calling it a Harvest Map, which we're also offering to the commissioners that are collaborating in the Green Lions as a tool for other future curators to work with, but also to continue this process. This process is still an ongoing project that deals with the metabolism of Venice.

DR: One last question relates to the irrigation or containment system that will be installed in the pavilion for sustainability reasons, and how it relates to the artworks...

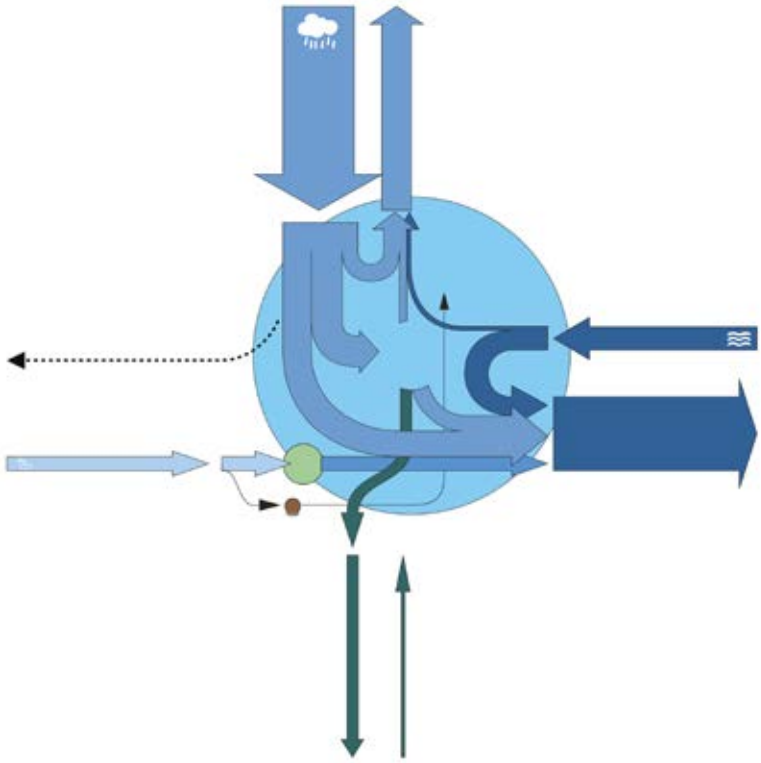
RK: And on top of that, there's the aspect of the economic calculations. You've calculated not only how much water will run off each year, but also how much value would be gained by implementing this retention system. Is there a break-even point, or would the actual cost of water have to be calculated differently?

JJ: Yes, indeed, this is directly related to this very low valued resource, water. On the roof of the pavilion, it rains down 180,000 liters of rainwater. But if you were to turn on the tap in your house in Venice, it would only cost 270 euros. If you multiply that by 10, that still wouldn't be enough investment to install a green roof on that pavilion. To install it, we need to create other improvements—maybe the acoustics will be better with the new roof, or the insulation could be increased. We are thinking about how we can use the materials that are already there. For example, we can install a five-square-meter version in a hidden room, so we don't have too many complicated regulations to test it and see how it works. This investment will lead to a completely new prototype of a natural water-containing roof, which we can install there at least until the next Art Biennale in April 2024. In the end, the dismantling of our exhibition turns into an installation of a test run.

DR: Thank you very much! That was very interesting. Would you make a final statement? Maybe we forgot to ask something, or you would like to mention something that we didn't cover.

AC: I'd just like to emphasize the concept of enacting change by doing. Many of the things we take for granted, the way current systems work, are human constructs. They are the result of some kind of agreement, consensus belief, or mass coercion, depending on how you look at it. And just as we have constructed these systems, we can deconstruct and reconstruct them. Much of what we're proposing concerns rethinking systems that we often think of as being timeless and immortal, but we don't have to take that as a given. Even the notion of the nation-state (and national pavilions) is one that can be easily challenged. We hope that the pavilion, but also cultural institutions and events more generally, can begin to not only discuss alternative possibilities, things that may seem completely crazy or radical or strange now, but begin to explore and push them through different forms of staging, to begin to enact and even normalize what may be better possibilities.
We always say that things are only weird until they become real. When they are real, and if they somehow work, they become obvious. It's that area between the weird and the obvious that I think we, as cultural institutions, can and should be working in.

CK: I totally agree with you, very well said, Aric. For me, this notion of scale is important. On the one hand, you have to understand global things and talk about those things, and on the other hand you have to do the things yourself, and sometimes you can drive the change through people showing what they do, like Jan does.



Systemic waterflow diagram by Superuse

JJ: For me, it was important to bring Carlijn's drawings to the Architecture Biennale as a helpful visualization. As architects, we make a lot of decisions that seem normal or neutral but are based on certain assumptions about how the financial system actually works. Visualizing these systems will teach you how they work and where the conflicts lie. This will teach us as architects how to work differently. We can think better about our own practices, where we often don't even consider the hidden costs of the resources we use and how unsustainable they are. These are completely internalized everyday practices of an architect to keep the amount of work low and use a lot of resources to do it. This, of course, reproduces a growth system that forces us to extract more and more resources to meet the needs of the system that generates them. This project wants to bring these considerations into architecture as something that can be seen and discussed in practice, and hopefully it also provides an impetus to future biennial models with new contributions in this way.

OnCurating: Wonderful statements! Thank you so much for your comments!

The interview was conducted 27 November 2023 via Zoom.

Nieuwe Instituut is the Netherlands' national museum and institute for architecture, design and digital culture. Based in Rotterdam, a global centre for design innovation, the institute's mission is to embrace the power and potential of new thinking, exploring the past, present and future ideas in order to imagine, test and enact a better tomorrow. Encouraging visitors of all ages to question, rethink and contribute, the institute's exhibitions, public programmes, research and wide-reaching national and international initiatives provide a testing ground for collaboration with leading designers, thinkers and diverse audiences, critically addressing the urgent questions of our times.

Aric Chen is General and Artistic Director of the Nieuwe Instituut, the Netherlands' national museum and institute for architecture, design and digital culture, in Rotterdam. American-born, Chen previously served as Professor and founding Director of the Curatorial Lab at the College of Design & Innovation at Tongji University in Shanghai; Curatorial Director of the Design Miami fairs in Miami Beach and Basel; Creative Director of Beijing Design Week; and Lead Curator for Design and

Architecture at M+, Hong Kong, where he oversaw the formation of that new museum's design and architecture collection and program.

Jan Jongert / Superuse Studios
Architect Jan Jongert is a co-founder of the architecture office Superuse Studios. Jongert is guest professor Circularity in the Built Environment at the Architecture Faculty of TUDelft. As a designer of interiors and buildings, Jongert works on tactics to enable the transition to a responsible society. With Superuse, he develops tools and processes and realises concrete projects that stimulate local exchange and production, as an alternative to transporting raw materials, products and parts all over the world, whereby much is lost unnecessarily.

Carlijn Kingma is a cartographer, but clearly not in the traditional sense. She is society's mapmaker, a cultural cartographer. Her astonishing drawings map the intricacies of our complex social systems. Kingma develops an architecture that reveals the social and political power structures we normally cannot see, and allows us to visualise new, alternative futures. For The Waterworks of Money, she collaborated with Thomas Bollen and Martijn Jeroen van der Linden. Thomas Bollen is a financial economist and a journalist with the Dutch investigative platform Follow the Money. Martijn Jeroen van der Linden is a professor of new finance at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. Kingma's spatial installations are designed and developed by architect Sarah van der Giesen.

Ronald Kolb is a researcher, lecturer, curator, designer and filmmaker, based between Stuttgart and Zurich. Co-Head of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, ZHdK and Co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal On-Curating.org. PHD candidate in the Practice-Based Doctoral Programme in Curating, University of Reading/ZHdK. The doctorale thesis entitled "Curating as Governmental Practices. Post-Exhibitionary Practices under Translocal Conditions in Governmental Constellations" deals with curatorial practices in global/situated contexts in light of governmentality – its entanglements in representational power and self-organized modes of participatory practices in the arts.

Shwetal Ashvin Patel is a writer and researcher practising at the intersection of visual art, exhibition-making and development studies. He works internationally– primarily in Europe and South Asia– and is a founding member of Kochi-Muziris Biennale in India, responsible for international partnerships and programmes. He holds a practice-based PhD from Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, where his thesis was titled 'Biennale Practices: Making and Sustaining Visual Art Platforms'. He is a guest lecturer at Zürich University of the Arts, Royal College of Art, and Exeter University, besides being an editorial board member at OnCurating.org and a trustee at Milton Keynes Museum and Coventry Biennale.

Dorothee Richter is Professor in Contemporary Curating at the University of Reading, UK, and head of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, CAS/MAS Curating at the Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland; She is director of the PhD in Practice in Curating Programme, University of Reading. Richter has worked extensively as a curator: she was initiator of Curating Degree Zero Archive, Curator of Kuenstlerhaus Bremen, at which she curated different symposia on feminist issues in contemporary arts and an archive on feminist practices, Materialien/Materials; recently she directed, together with Ronald Kolb, a film on Fluxus: Flux Us Now, Fluxus Explored with a Camera. She is executive editor of OnCurating.org.

Welcome to the Resort Six Theses on the Latest Structural Transformation of the Artistic Field and Its Consequences for Value Formation

Isabelle Graw

Thesis 1

The art world has seen the emergence of specifically constituted resorts, both online and offline, where artistic production is abstracted from and art is assessed on the basis of quantitative criteria.

The first signs of the latest structural transformation of the artistic field – and by structural transformation I mean lasting changes to economic and social infrastructures – were apparent even before the onset of the global pandemic. A key element of this transformation, I believe, is the relocation of many art-world interactions to the online sphere. Although this shift had commenced before the Covid-19 crisis, the pandemic accelerated and intensified it – for example, by fueling the rapid proliferation of so-called online showrooms. What interests me most about this shift are the consequences for the processes of value formation on the sides of both the production and the reception of art when art-world activities increasingly occur online. My perspective is that of a participant observer who, far from standing outside the sphere of value, examines its changing ways from a position of implicated distance. I see the art business's digital venues – Instagram first and foremost – as "resorts" of a sort, though social media are obviously more accessible than the *gated community* of a resort hotel. Analog resorts are emblematic of the exclusion of all those who cannot afford the trip or the stay; social media, by contrast, are in principle open to everyone with an internet connection.[1] Still, the denizens of Instagram likewise live in a resort-like bubble in which digital connectedness is mistaken for social relationships.[2] No longer exposed to the physical presence of others, they can act largely unconstrained by the complexities of their lifeworlds. Indeed, it is my observation that artists, critics, and curators present themselves online in ways that don't allow one to draw conclusions regarding the realities (and difficulties) of their life and labor. That is to say, the price to be paid for visibility on this platform is the invisibility of those social contexts in which works of art are embedded. It becomes difficult or even impossible to understand what is historically at stake in a particular artwork (which is not to say that the latter's significance is ever entirely bound up with those contexts). For it is only through an approximative reconstruction of those contexts that we are able to grasp what a work is trying to propose or suggest. The problem is that these formative contextual conditions are difficult to convey online, and so they fall away. The online showrooms' so-called *editorial* formats are no more suitable as a forum for this purpose – they tend to function like press releases and serve publicity purposes.

This *abstraction* on Instagram or in the digital showrooms from the conditions in which artists work also alters the parameters of value formation and attribution. For if the historical stakes of a piece of art cannot be understood without reference to the social context of the work of making it, these digital platforms cannot accommodate

an adequate critical reception. The polarizing structure of social media, it seems to me, likewise makes them hardly a welcoming environment for critique. When websites such as Facebook let the user choose only between "like" and "not like" – perhaps with the additional option of leaving a comment in a thread – nuanced debate is hard to come by.[3] Moreover, such rapid evaluation results in a "quantification" of art;[4] in other words, it gives rise to the impression that the relevance of a work can be gauged by the number of likes or by how many followers its creator has. The transmutation of art into a measurable quantity is something we are familiar with only from the sphere of auctions, where a work's putative value is expressed by the price it fetches. And so, just as price rules as the gauge of value in the auction sphere, the measure of creative success in the online domain is quantitative and not grounded in a substantive argument.

The situation was different as recently as the 1990s, when the market value of a work of art sold at auction typically derived from a symbolic value engendered elsewhere, by the consensus or dissensus of critics, art historians, curators, and the artist's peers.[5] Nowadays, by contrast, market values appear to be primarily driven by the question of whether a work promises short-term speculative gains, as the agent Lisa Schiff has recently observed with some regret.[6] Schiff – who, it is worth noting, works as an art advisor – aptly speaks of a "new mode of value production" in which the objects themselves, their aesthetic, historical, and/or political stakes, no longer play any role. All that matters today, she argues, are the "financial gains" that a prospective buyer hopes a work will generate. The ideal of an artwork totally removed from the market and defined by its "true essence, power, and ability to inspire" that Schiff invokes in sketching this history of decline is of course problematic. Yet despite her unbroken faith in the truly inspiring essence of art, her diagnosis of a new value regime is largely correct. We are indeed witnessing the beginning of a shift in the dynamic interplay between symbolic and market values in which market value seems to be gaining the upper hand. It would have been illuminating, though, if Schiff had made more of an effort to examine her own role in these changed processes of value attribution.

Thesis 2

The resort-like bubbles on Instagram aside, the analog art world, too, has seen the emergence of numerous luxury art resorts that, merely by virtue of their social homogeneity, are the antithesis of the prevailing emphasis on diversity.

But when I speak of "resortization," I am also alluding to a second trend toward – this time *literal* – resorts that has been apparent in the analog art world for a few years. I am referring to the phenomenon of several mega-galleries opening branches in the luxury resort towns frequented by the rich – places like Aspen, the Hamptons, or Monaco.[7] The resort gallery in the luxury enclave is not an altogether novel phenomenon – see, for example, the gallery Vito Schnabel established in Saint Moritz in 2015. Until recently, however, these galleries tended to play a subordinate role in the global market dynamic. This is changing right now, with major art-world players such as Hauser & Wirth opening branches in luxury resorts – most recently, Menorca. A short fly-through video released on Hauser & Wirth's Instagram account gives the viewer an idea of the sprawling finca-style hotel complex on the Spanish island in the Mediterranean. It abuts the sea and features outdoor sculptures including one of Louise Bourgeois's monumental *Spiders* as well as a country-style cantina under the open sky. True to the resort concept, the installation caters to the art collectors' culinary as well as aesthetic needs. In other cases, the arrival of the art business turns places one

ordinarily would not have suspected of drawing the jet set into potential luxury enclaves. Consider the Scottish village of Braemar, where Iwan and Manuela Wirth opened an exquisite hotel called The Fife Arms in 2018 that houses both their own collection and works of art commissioned for the site. Another community that has gone through a kind of luxury upgrade is the small town of Arles in France, which now boasts the collector Maja Hoffmann's private museum LUMA and numerous guesthouses Hoffmann has transformed into luxury hotels. One of them, the L'Arlatan, beckons with a complete set of interiors designed by Jorge Pardo, from the artist's signature lamps and colored floor tiles to the polychromatic patterns of the bedsheets. Both Arles and Braemar, one might say, have been given a radical makeover initiated by gallery owners and/or private collectors that has bumped them up into the rarified class of global luxury destinations.

Yet I would be remiss at this point not to mention the *contrary developments* in the artistic field that are occurring concurrently with this form of resortization. The trend toward art in resorts and art as a resort outlined above is offset by the efforts of a growing number of art institutions and galleries – prompted in part by protest movements like Black Lives Matter – to diversify their programming and integrate more non-Western practices and discourses. Numerous Western European museums have also initiated a long-overdue revision of the Western canon and are reconceiving their collections in a postcolonial perspective.[8] The decentering of art and art history has become a key concern in the world of biennials, manifestas, and documentas as well, as exemplified by documenta fifteen and its focus on collectivist-activist practices designed to largely circumvent the laws of the Western art market.

But, by drawing critics' attention, these welcome overtures and revisions have allowed another ongoing reorganization of the art economy to go unnoticed whose effect is the very opposite of diversity and decentering – it results in the exclusion of minorities and the consolidation of social homogeneity, the enforcement of conservative agendas, and the perpetuation of the principle of white supremacy, which is still deeply entrenched in parts of the art world. In other words, the growing political awareness in the art field and its progressive reorientation have oddly gone hand in hand with developments that have prepared the ground for a conservative backlash.[9] We might even go so far as to say that the emphasis on "learning and sharing" at this year's Documenta is not just a response – one that makes good sense – to today's crises and eroding social systems. Its proposal of a different and more communitarian economy, it seems to me, is also the flip side of the art world's transformation into a big business, with galleries as gigantic media enterprises. Both developments appear to be independent of each other but are actually intimately connected.

Let me not be misunderstood: obviously, there have long been manifold intersections between the "political biennial art" and "gallery art" segments, as illustrated by the instances in which collectors or galleries have covered the production expenses for works shown at the Venice Biennale. Ventures such as the Zwirner empire's branch 52 Walker in New York, which, under Ebony L. Haynes's leadership, exclusively shows Black artists, likewise demonstrate that the market's agents find ways to capitalize on the diversity imperative. My point is that we need to pay more attention to the ongoing restructuring – both online and offline – of the art economy, which cannot but affect progressive agendas as well.

The last time we witnessed a comparable simultaneity of disparate tendencies was in the 1990s, when the rise of multiculturalism and identity politics occurred in tandem with a reorganization of the art economy: a West-centric art world in which the retail dealer was the prevailing business model was transformed into a global visual industry dominated by corporate mega-galleries.[10]

Thesis 3
In a value-theoretical perspective, too, the art world's resortization represents a profound shift, especially because it implies that some actors who used to play an important role in value formation find their significance diminished.

The emergence of elite resorts in the art field has far-reaching consequences also for the theory of value, as the history of the origins of Western Europe's galleries illustrates. In the 19th century, galleries such as the Durand-Ruel (1834–1974) were established in cities like Paris in no small measure because those cities were also where the other agents involved in value formation (artists, critics, and art institutions) resided. That is to say, since the late 19th century, art dealers have seen the exchange of ideas with other agents in the field as being at least as important for their own efforts to build up the symbolic and market value of the art they represent as the close contact with affluent collectors. Lately, however, these priorities appear to have shifted, especially in the art trade's blue-chip segment: physical proximity to wealthy clients is now seen as crucial to the business – and that is exactly what the resort offers. Just as critique has no real place in the Instagram bubbles, critics, traditionally an opinionated bunch, would only complicate things at the resort. I will only note in passing that the freeports that have recently become a big talking point are in a sense precursors of the resort: not unlike the latter, these art storage facilities that have sprung up around airports like Geneva's are difficult to access.[11] Works of art are stored and traded in tax-free deals behind closed doors (away from the eyes of the art public). The freeports, it seems, put the "private viewing," a format that has caught on more widely since the pandemic, into practice on a larger scale and establish it as the standard mode of engagement with art – one that is likewise exclusive and reserved for select clients. All others – everyone who is not a member of the global moneyed elite – never know the first thing about it.

But the luxury art resort takes things even further than the private viewing and the freeport by featuring the amenities that let the dealers and their clients, who often arrive by private jet, celebrate a certain lifestyle in an exclusive setting. The time they spend together at the resort, needless to say, is put to good use on confidence- and value-building measures. The philosopher Martin Hartmann has argued that people are most apt to trust one another when they are at home "in the same institutional regime."[12] In other words, outsiders who come from a different class background and/or have less money and lack the expected urbaneness are less likely to gain their trust. The resort's social homogeneity, where the wealthy are surrounded by their own kind, thus prevents interactions within it from being contaminated by distrust. More so: social inequality and poverty are invisible inside the resort, promising frictionless transactions. All disturbing factors that might jeopardize the art deal are eliminated.[13] The participants meet each other in a relaxed atmosphere, as though they were on vacation. And that, of course, puts people in a spending mood, so that business is bound to be brisk at the resort.

Thesis 4
The resortization of the art world precipitates a new structural transformation of the public sphere that affects our conception of art.

I recently visitied Monaco to take a look at Hauser & Wirth's gallery branch and Galerie Johann König's showroom there. In both cases, the premises felt oddly deserted, as though awaiting the arrival of an art scene that could not possibly be at home in Monaco, given the exorbitant cost of living. What also struck me as unpleasant about Monaco is that the tiny city-state – which has a well-deserved reputation as an oasis for tax dodgers – provides virtually no public spaces such as parks or plazas for its residents. Every square foot is built up with tightly packed luxury apartment tower blocks, with the remaining space reserved for construction cranes and expressways. The main public attraction at the heart of this dystopia is the famous Casino de Monte-Carlo, where spectators gather outside to watch the Ferraris being parked.

Monaco, it seems to me, has taken the "privatization of the public sphere" – a tendency first observed by urbanists in the 1990s – further than most places: luxury real estate and luxury stores aggressively monopolize the public space. If you are not a millionaire, there is no room for you in this town.

Such luxury enclaves are obviously a far cry from the Habermasian ideal of a functioning public sphere sustained by social safety nets.[14] True, the old "critical public" that Jürgen Habermas favored in the 1960s was for its part integrated into a problematic construct, that of the nation-state. And it was steeped in colonial thinking and heteronormative premises. Yet despite its deficits and exclusions, this public at least represented a framework within which its flaws could be discussed and might in principle have been remedied. By contrast, resorts like Monaco strike me as paradigmatic examples of a new structural transformation – in particular of the art public – in whose wake globally dominant gallery corporations take charge of the process of value formation, to the exclusion of many other actors who have hitherto been involved in it. The resort effectively implements the same devitalization of public discussion and critical engagement that we already observed during the pandemic-era lockdowns. When openings were canceled, so were social interactions, and hate speech and mobbing increasingly ruled the day on the internet (which is not to say that positive experiences of community life do not also exist online). This forestalled substantive debate over the relevance of artistic practices, which compromised their credibility and hence also the basis of their value. Yet the rise of art-world practices that largely dispense with debate also hint at the possibility that the processes of value formation may in the future no longer have any need for such discourses.

Compared to the homogeneous and consistently socially privileged public of the resort, the traditional art public that came together in the 18th century looks positively hybrid and pluralistic. Thomas Crow has argued that the first salons in Paris attracted a distinctly heterogeneous audience that was defined by a certain social mobility.[15] Nothing remains of this plurality at the resort, where the members of the "global class of asset owners" dominate, in whose hands wealth is now accumulating.[16] If we also consider the fact that the idea of "modern art" has historically been directly bound up with the ideal of its public accessibility, it becomes clear that the art world's resortization cannot but have an impact on our conception of art. Given that the public at the luxury resort consists exclusively of affluent people, we might well ask whether the object of such an economy is even still art in the modern sense. Or do we need to find another name for what is presented and traded there?

According to Crow, the audience of the earliest salons in the 18th century was set apart by its eagerness to engage in discussion and its zeal to assess what it saw. This audience, he writes, was transformed into a veritable public only at the moment it *justified* and *set value on* artistic practices.[17] The development of an art public thus hinges on its ability to pass well-founded value judgments. Conversely, an audience that is no longer capable of explaining why it sets value on some works is incapable of constituting a public. Not unlike the digital platforms, the resorts would appear to be "competing publics" in which quantitative criteria are paramount.[18] On social media, it is the number of likes and followers that establishes value; at the resort, meanwhile, the "fictional expectations" of future increases of market value are decisive.[19] Either way, it seems to me that in both spheres, on Instagram and at the luxury resort, the symbolic value that other market actors negotiate elsewhere is increasingly peripheral.

Thesis 5
If you are not on Instagram, you may be forgotten.

Hardly anyone in today's art world resolves to go completely offline, even as almost everyone takes a critical view of the platform companies' machinations. To my mind, that is because of the risks that come with digital abstinence.[20] Art producers, especially ones who are only beginning to build their careers, do well to promote themselves on Instagram, lest they run the risk of not existing in the eyes of the other users – which is to say, pretty much everyone in the art world. Their work might vanish from the art world's collective memory and garner no attention and appreciation at all. Since the onset of the pandemic, opportunities to see and be seen at openings or other events were few and far between; so many actors in the field have shifted the focus of their activities to social media, where they now post incessantly. In this way, they make the platform companies' dream of "excessive users" a reality, a fact that I think users (myself included) hardly consider.[21] Perhaps voluntary submission to a most questionable corporation's demands strikes them as the lesser evil in comparison to the danger of being forgotten. As Rambatan and Johanssen note, Facebook's Cambridge Analytica scandal has led to a kind of detachment from the platform among users.[22] Yet despite this alienation, they post like there is no tomorrow.

Another conspicuous aspect of artists' online presentations is that they earn significantly more likes when they pose with their works. What I have described elsewhere as the personalization of anything and everything in celebrity culture has evidently been boosted to a new level by social media.[23] During this year's Venice Biennale, for example, numerous galleries posted photographs of "their" artists standing next to their works at the show, satisfied grins on their faces. The fact aside that these staged shots served the galleries to skim off the surplus value generated by their participation in the exposition, they also added to the credibility of the works on view, visibly tying them to a singular originator whose presence demonstratively attested to their status as unique objects – and that is what makes them a commodity of a special kind in the first place. As on other occasions, however, the downside of this visibility is that the artists, by appearing on Instagram with their creations, effectively present themselves as products available for consumption.[24] Again, people presumably think that the risks of invisibility outweigh the danger of being consumed. Plus, the penchant for self-staging is not a novel phenomenon in the art world – just think of Dalí and Warhol, two pioneers of the deft use of media for self-promotion. But these artists faced a nascent media society and were able to stake out their positions vis-à-vis its mechanisms; today's artists, by contrast, are dependent on Instagram, which is to say, on the good-

will of a dominant global corporation and its algorithm. Then again, smartly advertising one's own products and staging them on Instagram can also be part of the artist's (or critic's) work, as I know from personal experience.

Another factor that makes social media especially appealing to art-world actors is the ability to generate attention and appreciation while circumventing the traditional gatekeepers and authorities that confer recognition on artists.[25] The fact that social media are more permeable than traditional art institutions, their operations less defined by gatekeeping, selection, and exclusion, is what arguably makes them drivers of the diversification that is rightly called for today. They allow voices from beyond the often-invoked Global North to be heard. And while participation in the analog art world's social functions requires the completion of exhausting and sometimes humiliating initiation rituals, the internet accommodates manifold projections of self and allows for the coalescence of communities that would encounter resistance and/or be subject to discrimination away from the screen.[26] Social media's capacity for emancipatory-transgressive practices, that is to say, is real, but its flip side is that users surrender their data to a platform company that squeezes profit from them and, what is worse, is a powerful contributor to efforts to undermine the rules and institutions of the democratic order.[27] Even early apologists of the internet, such as Geert Lovink, now point out that little is left of its original emancipatory promise.[28] The reality is that social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have built a thoroughly regulated sphere in which economic pressures trump all other considerations – a sphere that resembles the resort.

Thesis 6
The art world's resortization is closely related to the financialization of the economy at large, in that both abstract from production.

The new art-world resorts currently being established both online (in the form of Instagram bubbles) and offline (in places like Monaco, Menorca, Aspen, etc.) are directly connected to developments on the macro level that are commonly described as the "financialization" of the economy.[29] Financialization means that profits are generated irrespective of productive activities and increasingly through financial channels – which is to say, they are based on an *abstraction from production*.[30] Although, as Jamie Merchant writes, corporations still try to squeeze extra work out of their employees while paying them the lowest possible wages, these conflicts over the organization of labor and working time largely do not affect the processes of financialization. In a financialized economy, wealth accumulates on the basis not of labor but of "revenue-generating assets" (Merchant), leaving all those behind who work for wages or fees.[31] Social inequality in the asset economy results from the fact that only asset owners achieve affluence, with their wealth rising faster than inflation or wages. And that class, needless to say, also includes art collectors, since ownership of a work ideally promises increases of market value far in excess of the returns to labor.

Then again, one might also argue that the global class of asset owners is interested in owning works of art because they are assets, as identified by their speculative potential for appreciation, but not assets pure and simple. Unlike other assets, works of art have not altogether severed the ties to the sphere of their production – on the contrary: the unique material work in particular is capable of suggesting that the creative labor expended on it is somehow stored up within it. We might accordingly say that works of art bring into play – with greater or lesser immediacy – the reality of labor that is

repressed in a financialized economy. That is true even of immaterial non-fungible tokens (NFTs), whose very name indicates that they are meant to be incapable of being exchanged or replaced. The NFT's assertion of originality emulates the uniqueness of the work of art. As with the latter, the imputation of value is also shored up by a reference to its singular creator.

And since both NFTs and other art and media forms owe their existence to an individual author and her specific artistic labor, they imply a residual reference to labor that financial products have long dissociated themselves from. Considered from this vantage point, works of art are attractive to asset owners for two reasons: one, because they promise a speculative appreciation that exceeds the returns from labor, and two, because they invoke the reality of labor that is repressed in a financialized economy. Even better, they (visibly or latently) bring realities of labor into play without the attendant nuisances to the wealthy (such as strikes or demands for higher wages).

Yet if the worlds of finance and art structurally resemble each other ever more closely, it is because they share an increasing focus on the processes of distribution, be it in the stock market or the sphere of auctions. In analogy with the monopolistic formations that distinguish digital capitalism, the commercial art world (and art resorts in particular) is ruled by a "very small number of very large corporations" that control "access to goods, services, and infrastructure."[32] Indeed, very few mega-players dominate the art resorts and determine inclusions and exclusions. Drawing on the terminology developed by the sociologist Philipp Staab, we might characterize art resorts like Hauser & Wirth Menorca as "proprietary marketplaces" in the mold of Amazon: as with Amazon, market-making and market access are key. The owner of the marketplace has the power to admit other market participants and set their own commission. If the luxury resorts of the art world appear to resemble the digital sphere's proprietary marketplaces, it is hardly surprising that the art world has also seen the emergence of proprietary online marketplaces modeled on Amazon, such as the Zwirner gallery empire's Platform, which presents and sells works offered by twelve smaller New York galleries. Zwirner gives his junior colleagues access to his distribution system and client base and, in return, receives a commission for the sales he brokers. The venture is a win-win for Zwirner because it also brings in fresh art and contacts for the gallery.

Still, online galleries like Zwirner's Platform should not be seen as proprietary marketplaces pure and simple. The bond between them and the works of their artists is too strong – they are dependent on a steady supply of the art commodities they sell. It seems, though, that the emphasis is more and more on the "efficient distribution of the goods being manufactured," and that is where both online and offline resorts are unrivaled.[33] The producers, by contrast – whether they are purveyors of art or critique – increasingly seem to play only a subordinate role in this sphere of distribution. Though here, too, a hierarchical distinction exists: artists with a proven record of market success are welcomed as the producers of the raw material on which the art resort runs and as personified guarantors of their product's value form; even more, they function inside the resort as proxies for the conditions of production that are otherwise repressed here. As for the critics, their flanking production of significance has certainly lost cachet at the resort, although some of them are still allowed in as guests as long as they follow up with glowing reports on Instagram – the collector Dakis Joannou's events on the island of Hydra being characteristic occasions for such reporting.

In light of these developments, we may wonder, of course, what it means for "art" as such when it increasingly circulates between digital bubbles and luxury resorts. What are the implications for the process of value generation when the influence of art-world actors who used to play a part in setting it wanes within the resort? And how does the ascendancy of quantitative criteria (like the number of likes and followers or market prices) in conjunction with the decline of contextual knowledge affect what is considered valuable? I recently talked to a few critic friends about the new value regime established by the art world's resortization. We asked ourselves whether artistic production might need to respond to the lack of public audiences and nuanced criticism at the resort by dialing up its internal discursiveness, effectively taking the production of its significance and contexts into its own hands. Given the growing structural resemblance between assets and works of art, we posed the question of whether artists might not do well to put greater emphasis on the difference their works make under the condition of convergence. We came to the conclusion that the current reorganization of the economy of art requires both artists and critics to rethink all their presuppositions, tools, and procedures. Such a reset, needless to say, cannot be instantaneous; it takes time. For now, we can only try to keep analyzing the latest structural transformation of the art world in all its facets. This may also be fertile ground for a critique that finds itself weakened in the resort: by keeping an eye on the current tendencies toward resortization in the various segments of the art world, critique might stand its ground and demonstrate that it has more to offer than rapid-fire evaluations or apologetic discursive embellishments.

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Notes

1 Unless they live in countries like Russia, where the authorities recently blocked Facebook and Instagram.

2 See "Das Unbehagen ist ein erster Ansatzpunkt," interview with the sociologist and social psychologist Vera King on the occasion of the symposium "Das vermessene Leben," Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, July 1, 2022, https://aktuelles.uni-frankfurt.de/gesellschaft/das-Unbehagen-ist-ein-erster-Ansatzpunkt/.

3 Then again, one might also consider "likes" the equivalent of peer recommendations in the analog sphere, which are of considerable significance in processes of value formation and recognition. Yet even if we regard them as essentially recommendations in digital garb, they do not allow for the differentiated supporting arguments that accompany the analog original. In other words, if "likes" alone determine whether my stock rises or falls, the substantial stakes of my work fade from view.

4 Steffen Mau, *Das metrische Wir. Über die Quantifizierung des Sozialen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017).

5 Isabelle Graw, "Symbolic Value, or: The Price of the Priceless," in: *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2009), 27–31.

6 Lisa Schiff, "As an Art Advisor, I've Watched 'Meme Art' Destroy All Logic in the Art Market. Here's What We Can Do About It," *Artnet News*, June 15, 2022, https://news.artnet.com/opinion/meme-art-op-ed-lisa-schiff-2131139.

7 These two pandemic-related "structural changes" – the expansion of the online market and investments in "physical gallery space, including in second-home locations such as the Hamptons, Aspen and Menorca," are also the subject of an article in Melanie Gerlis's "Collecting Updates" column for the FT; see her "Art Galleries Stage Strong Post-Covid Recovery, Art Basel–UBS Report Finds," *Financial Times*, online edition, September 9, 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/79358b90-8c71-4242-b583-

2fd192366746 (behind a paywall).
8 Meanwhile, the privatization of museums is moving forward in Germany as elsewhere; economic pressures force them to cooperate with private collectors, and sometimes they also appear as market participants in the auction sphere. Museums are manifestly not immune to the effects of resortization.
9 As Ben Davis points out in a recent interview with Ben Koditschek, the art market's transformation into a big business coincided with the nonprofit sphere's growing commitment to "institutional critique, community-based art, and questions about representation." I think his contention that the politicization of the art world also serves a compensatory role is not without merit. See Ben Koditschek, "The Relationship Between Art and Politics Is Shifting: An Interview with Ben Davis," *Jacobin*, online edition, June 27, 2022, https://jacobin.com/2022/06/art-politics-nft-museum-worker-unions-cultural-appropriation.
10 Isabelle Graw, "The Art World as an 'Industry Engaged in Producing Visuality and Meaning,'" in Graw, *High Price*, 147–48.
11 See also the ARTE documentary *Schätze unter Verschluss – Das System Freeport*, 2021.
12 Martin Hartmann, *Die Praxis des Vertrauens* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 467.
13 The HBO series *The White Lotus* vividly illustrates how class conflicts, exoticization, and racist discrimination are perpetuated at a resort. In the show, these phenomena manifest most distinctly in the form of clashes between the (white) patrons and the hotel staff, who are often people of color. The resort is portrayed as a zone that, far from being spared social conflict, condenses social antagonisms as though in a prism.
14 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). Originally published in German in 1962.
15 Thomas E. Crow, "The Salon brought together a crude mix of classes and social types," in *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 1–22, here 1.
16 Jamie Merchant, "Endgame: Finance and the Close of the Market System," *Brooklyn Rail*, March 2022.
17 See Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 5: "But what transforms that audience into a public, that is, a commonality with a legitimate role to play in justifying artistic practice and setting value on the products of this practice?"
18 Jürgen Habermas, "Überlegungen und Hypothesen zu einem erneuten Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit," in "Ein neuer Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit," ed. Martin Seeliger and Sebastian Sevignani, special issue, *Leviathan* 37 (2021): 470–500.
19 Jens Beckert, *Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
20 The following considerations benefited enormously from my exchange with Merlin Carpenter, who made the decision not to be on Instagram or Facebook. For a critique of platform companies, see Joseph Vogl, *Capital and Ressentiment: A Brief Theory of the Present*, trans. Neil Solomon (Medford, MA: Polity, forthcoming); Philipp Staab, *Digitaler Kapitalismus. Markt und Herrschaft in der Ökonomie der Unknappheit* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021); and Urs Stäheli, *Soziologie der Entnetzung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021).
21 Bonni Rambatan and Jacob Johanssen, "Networks and Psyches: Unleashed and Restrained," in *Event Horizon: Sexuality, Politics, Online Culture, and the Limits of Capitalism* (Winchester: Zero, 2021), 36.
22 Ibid.
23 Isabelle Graw, "Market-Reflexive Gestures in Celebrity Culture," in Graw, *High Price*, 156–226.
24 Rambatan and Johanssen, *Event Horizon*, 8.
25 Many observers have noted that the power of gatekeepers and experts is dimin-

ished online. I believe this effect has advantages as well as disadvantages. On the one hand, no one needs to wait today for someone to open the door for them so they can publish something. Anyone can present their thoughts to others for their consideration. On the other hand, Habermas rightly remarks that authorship is something that needs to be learned. Once the filters of editors and publishers are absent, online publishing allows for the dissemination of unhinged hate speech, conspiracy theories, and a flood of fake news, as we have all become aware. See also Habermas, "Überlegungen und Hypothesen."

26 See Legacy Russell's observations in conversation with me: "Bodies That Glitch: A Conversation Between Legacy Russell and Isabelle Graw," *Texte zur Kunst*, online edition, December 23, 2020, https://www.textezurkunst.de/de/articles/graw-russell-bodies-glitch/.

27 On the problem of platform companies' weakening the legal order, see also Vogl, *Capital and Ressentiment*.

28 Rambatan and Johanssen, *Event Horizon*, 36.

29 Greta Krippner, "The Financialization of the American Economy," *Socio-Economic Review* 3 (May 2005): 173–208.

30 Merchant, "Endgame: Finance and the Close of the Market System."

31 Lisa Adkins, Melinda Cooper, and Martijn Konings, *The Asset Economy: Property Ownership and the New Logic of Inequality* (Oxford: Polity, 2020).

32 Staab, Digitaler Kapitalismus, 20.

33 Ibid., 45.

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Rethinking Funding for the Arts in India

Tanya Abraham

The idea of arts funding did not emerge as a vital component in Kochi before the Kochi Muziris Biennale. Ever since 2012, when the government of the state of Kerala announced its support for and initiation of an international cultural event, the climate surrounding contemporary arts has been shifting. The impact the biennale has had has been noteworthy[1]; over the years, the city of Kochi has been recognized as a very important hub for the arts in India. However, in spite of the powerful impact on the city and its peoples, the question of funding remains, with the challenge being re-presented every year. Whilst a portion of the biennale's funds come from the government, the remaining funding is raised by the Kochi Biennale Foundation. A mammoth task. Since my association with the arts in the region prior to and after the biennale's first edition, funds from local patrons have always been a trickle. The feat of raising funds in Kerala is a challenge pertaining to its own social conditions and climate—the arts has long been a distant thought for the average public.

In my PhD thesis on the querying of the social impact of the Kochi Muziris Biennale on the state of Kerala and my own experience in running the non-profit arts organization, The Art Outreach Society (TAOS), my research opened up certain understandings regarding the social complexity of the region, which can be attributed to the relationship of the various publics to the arts. For one, prior to Indian Independence, the access to patronized arts was reserved to the upper classes/higher castes. Here, there is the aspect of art being viewed by an audience (theatre, performances, paintings, and so on), and then, arts found in crafts and daily occurrences of lived experiences.[2] So, for the common man, such everyday art was not necessarily "art to be viewed" but everyday art which uniquely merged into Indian society, formulated as a functional product. Traditional art forms found sustenance through events like temple festivals, worship, and so on. With the colonial influence on society, especially the British period, Western styles of art found patronage amongst the local wealthy who emulated the colonizers and created a new bourgeois attitude through it. Since Indian Independence, there has been a gradual shift in the social structure and also the emergence of new economies. Patronage towards the arts dimmed. Traditional art forms, however, continued to find life through daily life practices. With contemporary art, the task faced is different. It is a fairly new idea for the people of Kerala. It queries the need for funding in a society where patronage no longer thrives. The need of the hour is thus understanding the impact of the arts on society and the lives of its people, and it calls for an in-depth search into the nuances of its intricacies—the possibilities coming from art investment.

At the 2022 Kochi Muziris Biennale, the invited satellite exhibition that I curated was titled *A Place at the Table* focused on gender parity and the situated roles of women in Kerala society. Part of the exhibition was the community-participatory project called "Who Put Out the Fire?," where artists worked with women in unearthing ideology-based situatedness of women in Kerala through the positions in kitchens and lived experiences concerning cooking, food, and so on. Seven films created from the five-month project were exhibited at the biennale. Artists worked with homemakers from varied socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, bringing forth issues pertaining to women's societal place and roles instilled by ancient patriarchal frameworks. This involved weeks of in-depth research through interviews, sharing meals at

"Who Put Out the Fire?" , Satellite Project, Kochi Muziris Biennale 2022
Working of the project, Aug to Nov 2022, Artists working with women in their kitchens

homes, cooking together, and so on. The process helped in understanding the lives of the women, their desires, social/religious limitations, and so forth, and what kitchens specifically mean to them as spaces in homes where they bear the sole responsibility. Such work signifies the position of the common man and the significance art possesses in addressing pressing social issues. Through such artistic practices, art is given a position that pushes the current narrative it carries, thus providing new reasons for funding.

To allow the permeation of this understanding to seep into the fabric of society, for business firms and social organizations to understand the impact of the arts, these are the crucial questions: Can individual lives change? Can economies develop further than tourism? What is the multidimensional result of it? There have been a number of discussions, conferences, and organizations constantly working on creating awareness at the central level to create policy change. Yet only a handful of corporations have allotted their corporate social responsibility funds (and a very limited amount at that) to cultural development. The use of art as a tool in addressing social issues, public/personal health, etc., are unfortunately seen as a less authentic tool. Since 2016, TAOS has been working with victims of trauma (women, children, and juvenile prisoners) using the arts for psychological interventions, with its impact and work being monitored by the psychology department of Christ University, Bangalore. In spite of reports offered, the seriousness associated with art's ability to impact the human mind is questioned, and funding from corporations is often rejected due to "a lack of seriousness" in the field.

The issue of funding, in spite of the recent changes in the social climate which the biennale has created, however, still remains starkly vivid. The much-needed awareness regarding the arts has not shifted from a periphery level yet. Nor has a deep interest been sparked to view it from a new perspective, viewing it as a necessity for a 21st-century Kerala. The few arts institutions working towards hosting exhibitions, supporting arts education, and so on struggle to attain even the crumbs of funding budgets from corporations. As for the governmental structure in Kerala, it is very complex, with long waits for the allocation of promised funds and the politics of power between political parties. A high literacy rate, which sets apart the Keralite from the rest of the nation, has not, however, been exposed enough yet to the possibilities from the arts. Art education in schools, visits to exhibitions, workshops, and the like, to instill in young minds an interest for the subject, and a strategic plan for public awareness, both by private and public organizations, are remedies ready for implementation. In terms of awareness, an impactful strategy for its successful implementation calls for private and public investment. It seems like a chicken and egg situation.

The potential of a state which has established itself in the field of technology, education, services, and so on is a promising place to examine the possibilities of the impact of the arts within its unique social framework. Kerala has the highest female-to-male ratio (1084:1000, 2022 census[3]); it has witnessed a matrilineal system of inheritance for five centuries and has the highest literacy rate in the country (94%, 2022 census[4]). Kerala had an elected Communist government after Indian Independence in 1947 and continues to house one today. It thrives on a strong remittance economy, contributing significantly to its GDP.[5] The precarity from the Covid-19 pandemic emphasized that the dependence on inward remittances is a threat to Kerala's growth. In 2021, *The Hindu Business Line* published an article stating the importance of local production.[6] The possibilities of the impact of the arts on such a society of the Global South present a unique and interesting proposition in terms of funding and the investment in the arts. Not only is it crucial that events and exhibitions find sufficient monetary support to

continue to provide multiple benefits to society, but it is also imperative that investments are made in various other aspects of the arts—from education to participatory/community co-production—to encourage cultural development and intellectual growth. The art sector thus needs to explicate its relevance in society, not only through conferences and symposia but through individual and community experiences as well, creating funders as social venture investors and artists as entrepreneurs. What lies ahead via the arts in Kochi/Kerala is enormously promising, with the possibility of a unique study regarding a unique society. Will we attain support from those who see it as vital?

Notes

1 The instillation of a biennial culture, decentralization—shifts from the center to the periphery – concerning a Western format of biennials, a rise in local businesses, and the regeneration of second-tier cities in India are some of the impacts noted. Amit Jain, "The Impact of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale," www.academia.edu, accessed May 11, 2023, https://www.academia.edu/11825972/The_Impact_of_the_Kochi_Muziris_Biennale.

2 India has a tradition of art forms inculcated into daily life. Based on the ancient practice of caste, the division of labor included traditional crafts required for everyday life (jewelers, carpenters, potters, and the like). The creation of crafts was associated with necessities (worship, festivals, and so on), not necessarily viewed as art forms. Laila Tyabji, "Art, Craft & Beauty – a Subjective Caste System," in *Artistic Visions and the Promise of Beauty*, eds. Kathleen M. Higgins, Shakti Maira, and Sonia Sikka (Cham: Springer, 2017), 219–23, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43893-1_16.

3 "Kerala Population 2022 | Sex Ratio & Literacy Rate 2023," www.census2011.co.in, accessed May 11, 2023, https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/kerala.html#:~:text=Kerala%20Sex%20Ratio%202023.

4 Ibid.

5 D. Dhanuraj and Nissy Solomon, "How Remittances Have Shaped the Socio-Economic Landscape of Kerala," Moneycontrol, December 7, 2021, accessed May 11, 2023, https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/opinion/how-remittances-have-shaped-the-socio-economic-landscape-of-kerala-7799341.html.

6 "Kerala Must Grow beyond Remittance Economy: S Gurumurthy," *The Hindu Business Line,* October 26, 2021, accessed May 11, 2023, https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/kerala-must-grow-beyond-remittance-economy-s-gurumurthy/article37176739.ece.

Tanya Abraham is a PhD student at the curatorial platform, the University of Zurich(ZHDK) and the University of Reading (UOR). Her thesis concerns contemporary art formats in a culturally traditional society (Kerala, India) and its impact on society through participatory art practices. Since 2012 she has been working as a researcher and curator in the field of culture and the arts in Kerala. She has to her credit, two books in the field, and contributes as a writer to the national publications Times of India and Art India. Tanya is also the founder-director of the award-winning non-profit organisation The Art Outreach Society (TAOS). Her work associated with it concerns gender roles, art education, and societal impact has been recognized with awards by both private and government institutions for its strong impact on societal change via art education. She has curated a number of exhibitions; In 2016 she curated as collaterals of the Kochi Muziris Biennale two art education projects (exhibitions) titled

“Artist the Public Intellectual” and “Landscapes and Silence” , the latter in collaboration with Canadian curator Wayne Baerwaldt. In 2018 she curated the collateral exhibitions “Red Crown Green Parrot” on retracing the lost history of Kochi's Malabari Jews, and “Of Memories and Might”, a women's exhibition on querying women's roles in society. Some of her other projects include “Influences of an Ancient Nation”, Kashi International Residency 2015 in association with the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, and “My Name is Gayatri Gamuz” , 2013, in association with Museuo Fundacion Antonio Perez, Cuenca, Spain in addition to others. Her exhibition during the Kochi Muziris Biennale 2022 titled “A Place at the Table”, was a participatory public art project of an embodied experience, concerning Kerala’s public’s relation to contemporary art woven in relation to the position of women in Kerala society.
Tanya lives and works in Kochi, Kerala, and represents her state in the National FICCI Culture Committee, New Delhi.

Intersecting Trajectories and Funding Paradigm Shifts in the Cultural Sector: A Perspective from Dakar

Delphine Buysse in collaboration with Mame Farma Fall

Current and Past Scenarios in Relation to Cultural Policies

The independence movements placed African countries in the historical situation of needing to conceive a project that would convey a vision imbued with a strong national identity. As a former French colony, Senegal did not escape this phenomenon, and its first president would rely on *Négritude* as a national and democratic ideology. Léopold Sédar Senghor perceived culture as a means of economic, social, and political development, and his two fundamental axes were the rooting of the values of Black African civilization[i] and to the opening to other civilizations. Moreover, in the preamble of its constitution, the State would grant a primordial place to cultural values as fundamental for the cementing of national unity.

Under the driving force of the poet president, Senegal sees the creation of many institutions such as the National Institute of Arts, the Daniel Sorano National Theatre, the National Tapestry Manufacture, and the Dynamic Museum, whose first exhibition will take place on the occasion of the first World Festival of Black Arts (also known as FESMAN) in 1966. In 1968, he enacted a law stipulating that one percent of the total amount of public construction must be reserved for the realization of contemporary works of art. It is the symbol of a desire to extend an aesthetico-political vision to the walls of the city of Dakar. President Senghor is the subject of much criticism, mainly related to the nature of his links with the former colony, perceived as a defender of the "neo-colonialism" imagined by France to perpetuate its domination over Africa.[1] His detractors also accuse him of promulgating an art of diplomacy and state, on which artists become financially and intellectually dependent.[2] Finally, he is challenged for his use of Négritude as a theory and praxis of disalienation.

From Léopold Sédar Senghor to Macky Sall, through the period of structural adjustment under Diouf and Wade's large-scale projects,[3] each president has developed his own version of policy for the cultural sector. The analysis that emerges is a severe lack of continuity which results in a form of institutional instability due to a succession of ministers who barely have time to implement the projects. In an interview with the newspaper *Enquête* + in 2017, Professor Ibrahima Wane deplored the lack of development of "a real policy with a vision, priorities, and evaluation methods."[4] There are initiatives, but they are merely band-aids in the context or the struggle as part of the cultural sector, "on the basis of some bright ideas."[5]

In this case, the current president's first sectoral policy letter was not drafted until three years after his first term, which reveals the regard given to culture in a world where the intangible is not considered. Moreover, the fact that culture in Senegal is mainly informal is probably not an argument. "Unfortunately, in our policies, we only see what is profitable; culture is not quantifiable in a few figures,"[6]' regrets Professor Ibrahima Wane.

AC Assembly 2023 in the Netherlands, Photograph by © Delphine Buysse

RAW Material Company

Invited by David Adjaye in 2009 to co-curate his exhibition *GEO-Graphics: A Map of African Art Past and Present* in Brussels, curator Koyo Kouoh decides to present the independent institutions that have reshaped the art scene in Africa. She was already asking the question of the potential for change for art institutions in a context undermined by politics and market rules.

Some time later, RAW Material Company is born in Senegal as an independent space, in resistance to the legacy of a dominant vision of the arts, imposed through a cultural policy implemented by the post-colonial administration and in response to the need to address the institutional void and the absence of critical thinking spaces in the arts sphere. In 2011, the Center for Art, Knowledge, and Society opens a physical space in Dakar for knowledge sharing, expression of free and differentiated thought and alternative education.

Convinced that "art centers are not only products of their environment, but also active agents capable of shaping their societies in return,"[7] its founder Koyo Kouoh applies her research to a self-organized functioning that emancipates itself from dominant paradigms that are based on a dichotomous opposition of center and periphery.

Navigating the Fundraising System

Notwithstanding the number of cultural initiatives, symbols of a dynamic and flourishing scene in Senegal, the cultural sector still sorely lacks government support. Thus, the first funding solutions that actors turn to are external: it comes mostly from cooperation agencies or institutions. Often non-structural, this type of subsidy rarely involves working capital or the launch of a structure but is presented in the form of calls which focus almost essentially on projects: this has the effect of maintaining a form of dependence on donors, with the cultural actors barely keeping their chins above water. Long and complex to fill out, most of these forms and files recreate a form of

hierarchy of knowledge where only those who have the keys to a precise semantics are able to apply. Moreover, the appeals are unfortunately often written by people who are far removed from the concrete realities of the field. They sometimes reveal a network hierarchy which leaves the strange sensation that the dice are already loaded. There is also a lack of follow-up and analysis of the projects, which prevents continuity and the reproduction of models that work.

When the call is won, the administrative aspects are often so demanding that they can jeopardize the artistic and organizational autonomy of the projects. Some institutions impose their themes in relation to their funding axes, sometimes defined one or two years in advance. This inevitably influences the themes addressed by the cultural actors, even if they are really relevant in their programmatic axes, meaning ideally linked to their contexts. For example, it is obvious that digital technology is a priority, but everything depends on how it is approached in accordance with endemic problems, such as access to electricity or technology.

The standards, rules, criteria, and other deliverables can become so restrictive that they almost require additional staff to manage the files, and they end up nipping the project in the bud by taking over the research or implementation of the latter. In addition, the extensive administrative process of cooperating institution and the delays of bank transfers to Africa add to this scarcity of human resources. It happens sometimes that the institutions consider themselves better able to manage these files and end up proposing an artistic program that remains a form of cultural diplomacy where the stakes of representation are blatant.

The RAW Model

From the very beginning, RAW Material Company set up a mechanism of savings that allowed it to maintain autonomy from the financing systems and to cope with the precariousness of the cultural sector. During the pandemic, for example, some contracts with donors coming to an end were difficult to renew due to the global situation, but this savings system, accompanied by patronage, made it possible to secure the entire staff as a priority in order to take time to find solutions and new partnerships. Since its creation in 2011, Koyo Kouoh, Marie-Hélène Pereira, and now Fatima Bintou Rassoul Sy have decided to focus first and foremost on strengthening the team. According to Mame Farma Fall, administrative director of RAW Material Company, "The second way to avoid any interference in the artistic vision is undoubtedly to build a long-term program that shows a strong and inalienable direction and to take into consideration the importance of narrative reports."

RAW's business model as it exists today was really thought out and formalized during the first transition period (2014-2016), which gave rise to a new physical space and the Academies. This (initially biannual) program for research, study of practice, artistic thinking, and curating takes the form of an experimental and experiential residency based on knowledge sharing between a director, faculty, and fellows. For Mame Farma, "The Academy is the flagship project of RAW Material Company, which has allowed for the adhesion of larger funders and a move away from an economic system that initially relied on more ad hoc and localized funding. The institution relies partly on the strength of this project, and the publications provide some real continuity. In addition to the outcomes related to the involvement of the ecosystem or the new forms of collaboration that emerge, the impacts are felt beyond the borders of Senegal.

OH Gallery, *Dak'art Biennale*, 2022: overview of the IN exhibitions in the Ancien Palais de Justice de Dakar. Photograph by: © OHGallery.

Today, RAW operates on an economic model that differs from most cultural structures in the Senegalese environment, which allows it to have a real team of employees. Its founder is also known for the "empowerment" she transmits, mainly to women. Mame Farma started in 2016 that feels she was truly accompanied before taking over the administration. "After Koyo was appointed to Zeitz Mocaa's artistic direction, RAW successfully completed the various handovers," says the administrator, "and yet, a handover is not an easy thing: it is not just about practical changes, it requires a lot of intellectual and psychological preparation."

Biennials and Funding Paradigm Shifts

This article is a continuation of five years of research exploring the phenomenon of biennials and their impact on contemporary art production and the market. It is therefore interesting to take a detour through the case of the Dak'art Biennale to address the shift in funding paradigms. Like any biennial, the Dak'Art Biennale is political, and all the more so since it is mainly financed by the State. It is also supported by cooperation institutions and private donors. The difficulty lies in the lack of access to official but non-confidential information. Reports have been produced by the different artistic directors, but they are not made public and remain difficult to find. Statistical surveys have been implemented for the last two editions with investigators present to conduct satisfaction surveys in the official exhibition venues, but the results and analyses remain untraceable. A larger study had even been implemented by the European Union in 2014. The lack of resources suggests that the issues raised are not taken into account and that the economic impacts are not really studied. In 2022, an open letter requesting an audit was sent to the ministry by a group of Senegalese artists.

In recent editions of the Dak'art Biennale, a system of commissions that operates through a contracting cell was established. However, the bidding system recreates inequalities because its circumvention allows those with the greatest number of possibilities to submit responses, regardless of conflicts of interest. This form of commodification of biennials leads to imbalances in ecosystems. At the level of management and

organization, everything happens as if Bourdieusian fields are clashing with sectors of activity that do not understand each other or do not share the same vision of the art world.

This post-pandemic edition of Dak'Art Biennale was a great success both locally and internationally, except maybe for a single article that,[8] besides being the result of journalistic work carried out with an agenda, nevertheless made an interesting argument: events, art centers, and museums are developing at an incredible speed in the sub-region and on the continent, which inevitably leads to an increase in market injunctions and, at the same time, in competition. If Dakar will always have a prominent place in the history of contemporary art and biennials, it is essential that government authorities grasp the issues and challenges to remain in the race. For example, it is hard to believe that Senegal still does not have a pavilion at the Venice Biennale. It is also incredible to think that a place as mythical as Dakar still does not have an official space dedicated to visual arts.

Reproduction of Unequal Relationships and Dichotomies

In North-South collaborative projects, the Northern partner is often designated as the controlling authority. This configuration induces vertical lines between the North and the South and unbalances social dynamics from the outset, with the risk of creating perverse effects. By imposing a hierarchy of roles rather than a division of tasks based on the sharing of knowledge, it perpetuates systems of representation that lead to a form of negation of the knowledge and skills linked to the mastery of the context, systematically infantilizing the Southern partner, regardless of their years of experience or the naivety of the Northern actor.

And that's not counting the forms of exploitation that can arise if budgets are managed in a non-transparent way, or simply when one of the parties doesn't have control over all aspects of a complex, context-related situation. One of the many examples is the issue of obtaining a visa. Discriminatory conditions often require artists from the South to have a minimum amount of money in their bank account, or to have a bank account at their disposal, which is not always the case. Added to this are the difficulties of accessing certain banks abroad, not to mention the fees not refunded in the case of a refusal. If the artist nevertheless manages to obtain a visa, regardless of all these factors, his or her situation becomes even more precarious, since in most cases he or she will only receive payment on arrival.

In the absence of regulations, and given the informality of the cultural sector, co-operative bodies sometimes play with the shortcomings of the system. In one case, for example, a structure offers a photographer the possibility of exhibiting within its walls, covering production costs but on the condition that the works are transferred to the structure at the end of the exhibition; in another case, the request made to the photographer simply amounts to transferring his or her rights in perpetuity. While the question of intellectual property is quickly resolved, that of rights is unfortunately subject to both a lack of regulation and a form of ignorance that needs to be remedied with a great deal of comprehension. Indeed, copyright, exhibiting rights, and acquisition rights must be dealt with separately. Initially created to protect performing artists, there is an organization to protect copyright in Senegal, SODAVE, but its application to the visual arts still lacks mediation.

Many external initiatives are attracted by the influence of Dakar. They arrive with ambitious project proposals, replete with a fixed and almost caricatured nomenclature that promises "sustainable exchanges" and other advantages of "visibility, multiculturality, etc." However, most of the time it turns out that these exchanges have been considered in a one-sided manner, biased by the development paradigm which consists of thinking that a method that has proved its worth in one context necessarily be ideal in another part of the world

Allegedly based on co-construction principles, they are sometimes devoid of content, or may be imbued with a non-anchored practice, i.e., a way of doing things that is not based on a contextualized study and that forgets to take into account a number of essential points: the historicity of the context (what has already been done, what has worked), continuity (what has failed and why, the phenomena of reproduction), the cosmologies of links (local ecosystem), sociological sustainability (i.e., feasibility with regard to sociology), and the receiver, recipient, or beneficiary (his or her challenges, needs, desires, obstacles, etc.). The perpetuation, even unconscious, of epistemological prejudices does not allow for true collaboration in the form of knowledge exchange, free from clichés or projections. Deciphering these phenomena requires an acuity that can only be acquired over the years, and which must be accompanied by a sufficiently strong anchoring but also, it has to be said, by an economic model that allows aligned refusal for ethical reasons.

If Dakar has always been the object of a singular force of attraction, the magnet effect sometimes occurs when large-scale exogenous proposals arrive, full of good intentions, knowing that they will benefit from its aura. They present themselves as unmissable events on the Dakar, and even Senegalese, agenda, which didn't wait for them to exist, as Senegal already vibrates with a multitude of cultural initiatives on a daily basis. Everyone is looking to make the most of the repercussions of this arrival, opportunities being fostered by networking and relational capitalization that reproduce the hierarchies inherent in the diktat of the market. The cooptation or non-cooptation of speakers/participants thus redraws a cartography, revealing an entre-soi, partially inevitable in a microcosm, but nonetheless guided by personal interests and geo-political strategies (name dropping, social washing). This generates tensions in the social fabric that undoubtedly reflect the fragility of the cultural sector, because the sociology of art is not taken into consideration: there is an ecosystem that works and fights daily in the field. We can no longer continue to move forward while ignoring these ecologies of links.

Alternative Responses

Exogenous injunctions have always existed in Dakar because of its history and the security situation, but also because of the dynamism, creativity, and hard work of its artists and cultural actors. The real question behind this article lies in the responses that the actors, intermediaries, and artists themselves have found to address these external injunctions while retaining their particularism. How do they navigate the great game of contemporary art? How do they navigate the globalization of culture and the global standardization it brings with it, while avoiding a form of acculturation?

Perhaps the most obvious example is Issa Samb, aka Joe Ouakam, who is the godfather of RAW Material. Joe Ouakam is a multidisciplinary artist who has helped liberate an independent movement from a dominant vision in Senegal. As a militant artist, he has fought throughout his career for mental and artistic freedom, through healthy contestation and respectful critiques. He chose to remain in Senegal when others left because

Antoine Tempé, RAW Material Company, 2016. Photograph by: Antoine Tempé © RAW Material Company

he was aware of the impact of the environment on the act of creation. Influenced by Marxism, he developed an aesthetic "rarely found in the canons of contemporary African art."[9] Alongside Djibril Diop Mambéty, El Hadj Sy, and Youssoupha Dione, Agit'Art collective was founded in the mid-1970s, in resistance to a projection of the political and cultural philosophy of *négritude* and an object-based conception of art. Ephemerality, interdisciplinarity, interaction, and participatory action were the watchwords. In the interview conducted by artist Mohamed Ali Fadlabi[10] on the occasion of "Word! Word? Word!, Issa Samb and the Undecipherable Form,"[11] held at the Norwegian Office for Contemporary Art, Issa addresses these questions about the links maintained by President Senghor between Senegalese artists and the state, confessing his disagreement with the ideology of *négritude* but acknowledging the importance of Senghor's and Senegal's involvement in culture. Anchored in the collectives, he also had a very particular vision of the art market system. In a documentary directed by Wasis Diop in 2010, he talks about the effects of this materialization on young artists and the "agents" of the commercial world who "sing about people they undeserve, hoping only to make a profit from them."

Despite her international notoriety, RAW founder Koyo Kouoh and her successors have always maintained a form of independence from the diktat of hegemonic or speculative validation systems, relying first and foremost on hard work, exacting standards, and rigor. However, RAW is not impervious to the market and participates in it in some ways. Most of its members have backgrounds in finance, business, or art marketing. This has always enabled the team to maintain a cultural awareness of what is going on in the market. In fact, RAW members are regularly invited to take part in curatorial programs in the framework of international events that are totally linked to the market economy (1:54, ARCO, Expo Chicago, Berlin Gallery Weekend, etc.). RAW is therefore not totally sidelined from the system, as it has become a crediting system for artists or organizations. In the triangular process of valuing artworks, prescribers have an influence on the symbolic value of artworks, and therefore inevitably on their market value. Passing through RAW offers another form of validation, based on learning a method, entering a network, and the resulting collaborations. This was the

case, for example, for artist Ibrahima Thiam, who was integrated into Galerie OH following the *D'une Rive à l'autre* exhibition.

Arts Collaboratory, Tontine and Iumbung

By joining the transcontinental network Arts Collaboratory in 2013, RAW quickly became involved in the conversation about collaborative solidarity between the Souths, which called into question old inherited practices and mechanisms ill-suited to multiple scales.

Created in 2007, Arts Collaboratory was initially conceived as a funding program and knowledge-sharing platform by two Dutch foundations (DOEN and Hivos). Its aim was to support alternative arts structures attempting to act in their own contexts, and at the same time to create a network of South-South organizations. In 2013, the network expanded considerably to twenty-five independent art centers located on five continents—among them ruangrupa.[12] All share a common vision and goal of sustainable social change in diverse local contexts, through a multiplicity of practices. In 2015, following a reflection on the role of funding bodies in the sustainability of artistic and organizational practices, the main funders withdrew from their central role and joined the conversation as members or observers. The collective then began a process of experimentation in which both funding and arts organizations work together towards a genuine paradigm shift in funding, more specifically in the relationship between donors and recipients.

In this process, the main questions raised involve the rethinking of funding models, work methodologies including art on a local and transnational level, unlearning old ways of working, and collective and translocal autonomy. The working group reflects on the terminology of sustainability and money and looks for ways of doing things differently: replacing restrictive accountability mechanisms, creating collective management methods, exploring less material economies such as sharing or exchange, experimenting with mutual support (care), and horizontal relationships with donors.

In Senegal and in West Africa, we find traditional solidarity institutions such as the tontine, which is a "system of savings and credit, but also of social protection, a place of cultural exchange and a network of influence."[13] The basic principle is simple: they rotate savings and credit associations in which members make regular payments, in kind or in money, the total of which is distributed in turn (Bouman, 1977; Henry et al., 1991).[14] Not all tontines are alike: there are family tontines, neighborhood tontines, entrepreneurial tontines, religious tontines and so on. What they all have in common, however, is that they privilege the group over the individual. The first written mention of tontines in Africa dates back to 1952. However, "*esusu*"[15] is said to have existed since the mid-19th century.

These savings operate according to autonomous logics, most often in parallel with the banking sector, the main official saver. The associations of rotating savings and credit is "a form of collective saving in which the notion of group is decisive in the collection and distribution of funds; the tontine group acts as a mediator between agents who alternately have a capacity and a need for financing."[16] One of the distinctive features of Senegalese tontines is their capacity for self-control, thanks to the social mechanisms developed by the tontine owners who manage them. The latter set up very solid circuits that define their norms and rules for collecting and allocating resources, making tontines well-organized and formal financial structures, contrary to what

many economists think.[17] All too often, a binary comparison marginalizes this system, even though it is standardized but reputed to be informal.

Like the tontine, the lumbung[18] is a collaborative model that applies to ideas, knowledge, processes, and the shared use of resources. The proposal by the ruangrupa collective is to consider lumbung as a practice (enabling an alternative economy of collectivity, resource sharing, and equitable distribution) and not as a concept. Appointed artistic director of *documenta fifteen,* the collective set up a kind of laboratory to showcase lumbung and allow it to develop through lasting interactions and relationships, collectively shaping the artistic process. As Art Basel 2022 drew to a close with a scathing critique of the over-capitalization of the art world, *documenta fifteen* opened, under the direction of a group of collectives whose first public statement very quickly pledged their opposition to the forms of domination induced by certain worldviews.

In the art sphere, funding hierarchies are linked to information and network hierarchies. Funding paradigms thus not only reproduce inequalities, dichotomies, and new hegemonies, but above all perpetuate a form of epistemicide, i.e., a negation of other forms of knowledge. Dependencies, prioritizations, interference in artistic direction, lack of contextualization and follow-up, social inequalities, and the weight of organizational modalities are all tinged with this development paradigm. Nevertheless, there are alternative responses, even if we have to acknowledge that the two spheres of the art world have always coexisted, as evidenced by the symbolic value and market value of a work, which are intimately linked. From collectives to structures, we have enough examples and hindsight today to study these working models, which come to us from all over the world, mainly from the South. But *documenta fifteen* also raised the question of what we mean by "Souths." It would be reductive to think that the solution is limited to territorialization. Moreover, it is essential to avoid the pitfall of contrasting traditional versus modern solutions, which once again projects an exoticizing dichotomy. This reveals the precautionary nature of deconstruction mechanisms, so as not to reproduce what we are in the process of questioning. Today, systems of domination are everywhere, and intersectionality shows us that questions can be considered in meta terms. Hence the importance of working together to challenge any thinking that imposes itself as dominant, because one method in its entirety will always be less effective than several methods together.

Notes

1 Laureline Savoye, "Sénégal : Léopold Sédar Senghor, icône pour les uns, énigme pour d'autres," *Le Monde Afrique*, December 23, 2021.
2 Anne-Marie Bouttiaux and Koyo Kouoh, *David Adjaye's Geo-Graphics: A Map of Art Practices in Africa, Past and Present* (Brussels: Centre for Fine Arts, 2010).
3 Thierno Diagne Ba, "Politique culturelle du Sénégal de Senghor à Sall," *Le Quotidien*, July 18, 2014.
4 Bigue Bob, "Des acteurs dressent le bilan à mi-parcours de Macky Sall," *Enquête +* (February 2017).
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Koyo Kouoh, *Combler les vides. L'émergence des espaces indépendants d'art contemporain en Afrique*, in État des Lieux. Symposium sur la création d'institutions d'art en Afrique (Dakar: RAW Material Company and Hatje Cantz, 2013), 9-11.
8 Armelle Malvoisin, "La Biennale de Dak'Art tient par son Off," May 29, 2022.

9 Koyo Kouoh, ed., *Word! Word? Word! Issa Samb and the Undecipherable Form* (Berlin: OCA Norway, Sternberg Press, and RAW Material Company, 2013), 7-34.
10 Conversation between the Sudanese artist Fadlabi and the Senegalese artist Issa Samb, The Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA), translation by M. Chanat, 2013.
11 The Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA).
12 See below.
13 Emmanuel Bidzogo, "Vers un véritable autofinancement de l'investissement en Afrique ? Témoignage en forme de projet, de souhait, de suggestion sur les tontines au Cameroun," *La Revue des Sciences de Gestion* 255-256, nos. 3-4 (2012): 167-170.
14 Raphaël Nkakleu, "Quand la tontine d'entreprise crée le capital social intra-organisationnel en Afrique : Une étude de cas," *Management & Avenir* 27, no. 7 (2009): 119-134.
15 This is the name for tontine in Nigeria.
16 Papa Sow, "Formes et comportements d'épargne des Sénégalais et Gambiens de la Catalogne (Espagne)," *Géographie et cultures* 56 (2006).
17 Ibid.
18 This is the Indonesian term for a communal rice barn, where the surplus harvest is stored for the benefit of the community.

Delphine Buysse is a Belgian-born curator who has lived on the African continent for 17 years now. Based in Dakar since 2018, she was part of the curatorial team of the 14th Dakar Biennale. Buysse has a degree in communication of art and an MBA in cultural management and the art market. She is pursuing her studies in philosophy and is a PhD candidate in sociology of art at Cheikh Anta Diop University (Dakar). She was a member of the doctoral school of Les Ateliers de la Pensée, in Dakar, in 2022. She has a strong focus in urban spaces and works with community-based initiatives to promote greater access to contemporary art also in relation to digital art. Buysse has collaborated with initiatives like the KIKK Festival (art, science, and technology) in Belgium since 2019 and with Ker Thiossane in Dakar, among other art institutions. She founded two organizations in Dakar to support emerging artists and taught at ISAC (UCAD). She is now curator of programs at RAW Material Company.

Mame Farma Fall is a financial auditor. She has more than 8 years' experience in auditing assignments with a chartered accountancy firm in Dakar. She also manages the accounts of a number of small and medium-sized enterprises with the A2C accounting assistance firm. She is General Manager at RAW Material Company where she has coordinated many exhibitions and discursive programs since 2016 in collaboration with the programming team. Farma works closely with the Program Director on funding applications. At the same time, she manages RAW's accounts and staff.
Her passion is fashion, with a project called SIMACK AADA set to be a couture studio, where she will aim to revalue the beauty of our African outfits, and authenticity.

Overpriced, Under-represented, Gate Guarded; The Last Ten Years of the Art Market

Elif Carrier

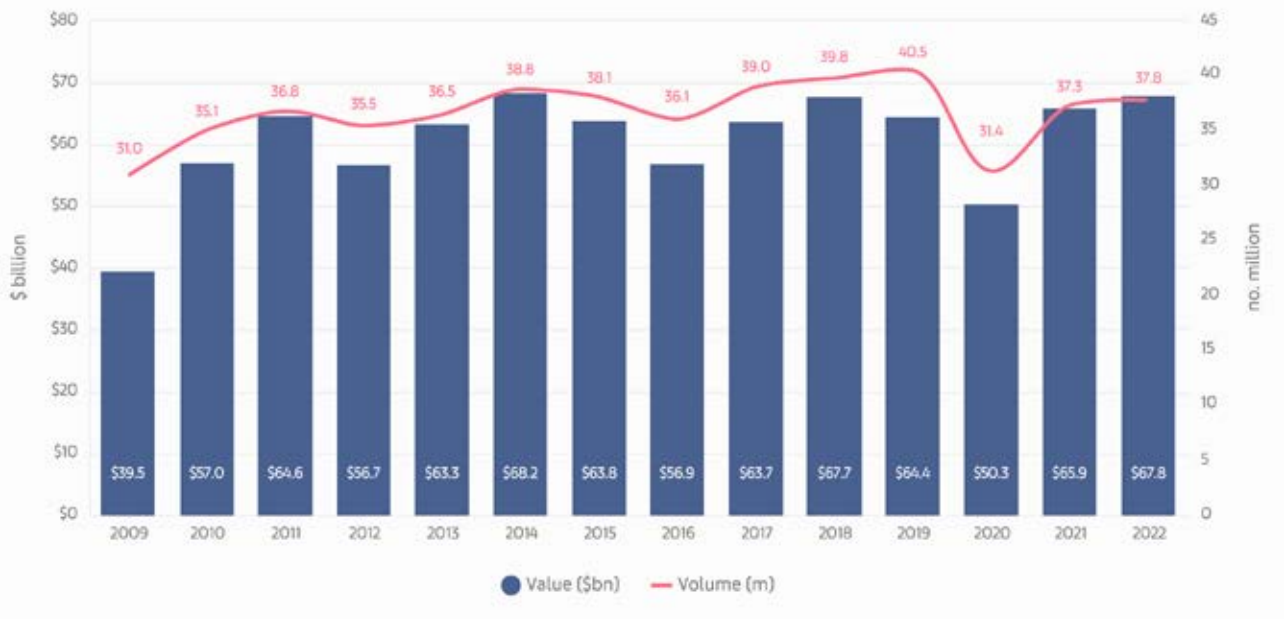
In his essay, "The Contemporary Art Market Between Stasis and Flux," Olav Velthuis explains how interconnected trends of commercialization, globalization, and financialization that have taken place in recent decades have formed new regimes of value in the art market, changing the previously existing market logic. These changes are evidences, pointing out the flux in the art market, and they are pervasive. He also argues that the key elements of the art market have stayed the same since its establishment in the second half of the nineteenth century, and they are reincarnations of the past. Therefore, Velthuis says the art market can also be seen as a market in stasis.1 Velthuis wrote his essay in 2012, and he predicted that the art market in 2022 would look like it did when he wrote his essay, or it would look like it did a century and a half ago, arguing that even "underneath a changing surface, the art market's structure is remarkably resilient."[2]

Ethics of Collecting, Pablo Helguera, 2022. Courtesy of the artist

Since then, the world has gone through a global pandemic and given rise to the social movements of #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter. Was Velthuis correct about his prediction? Can we trace the impact of these powerful social movements in today's art market, including the effects of a pandemic? How has the market changed if changed at all? And what has been the position of the artistic sphere in this global art machine? Let's start in contemplation of these questions by first looking at the most current art market figures with an aim to eliminate assumptions and present facts. It is estimated that there are close to 310,000 businesses operating in the global art and antiques market, employing over 3 million people.[3] Despite of the strong negative impact of the pandemic that saw sales and employment levels drop significantly, in 2022 the art market recovered and surpassed its pre-pandemic level figures, reaching global sales of $67.8 billion[4]; 55% of the sales came from dealers operating in the primary as well as in the

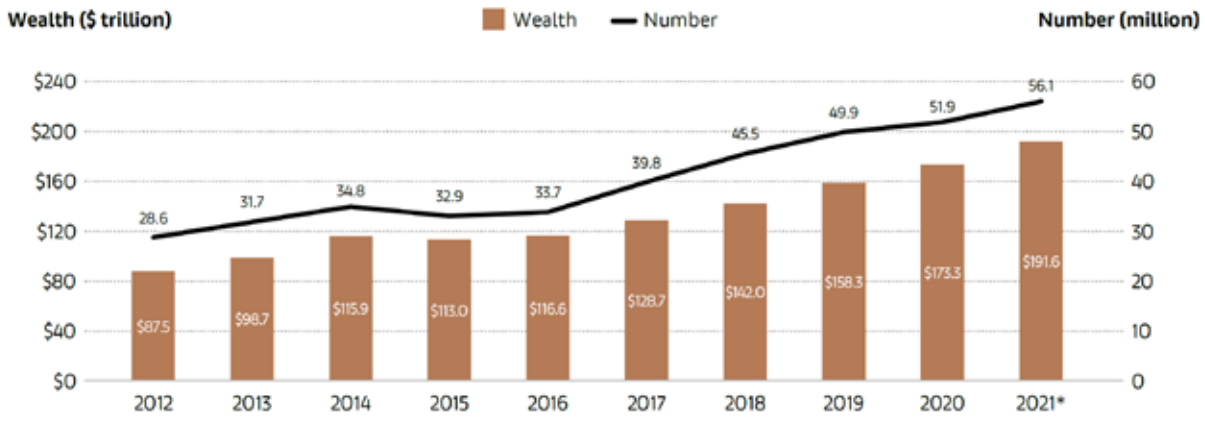
secondary market, and 45% of the global sales were accumulated by auction houses, with sales from Sotheby's and Christies accounting for 53% of the global auction sales market in 2022.

The majority of the sales took place in the USA with 45%, followed by UK with 18%, and China with 17%, the latter of which fighting for the number two place over the years. In the last decade, sales from these three countries consistently make up 80-85% of global sales. Other important sales markets are France, followed by Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Japan, and South Korea.



Graph 1: Global Sales 2009-2022. Claire McAndrew, The Art Market 2023: An Art Basel and UBS Report (Basel: Art Basel and UBS, 2023), p 20.

Identifying wealth has been an important indicator for evaluating art market performance. According to Forbes, in 2022 there were 2,478 billionaires in the world. The number of billionaires in 2022 dropped by 6%, driven by the lower numbers from Russia due to war and lower numbers from China due to Covid restrictions. Even with this decrease, billionaire wealth has doubled in the last ten years.

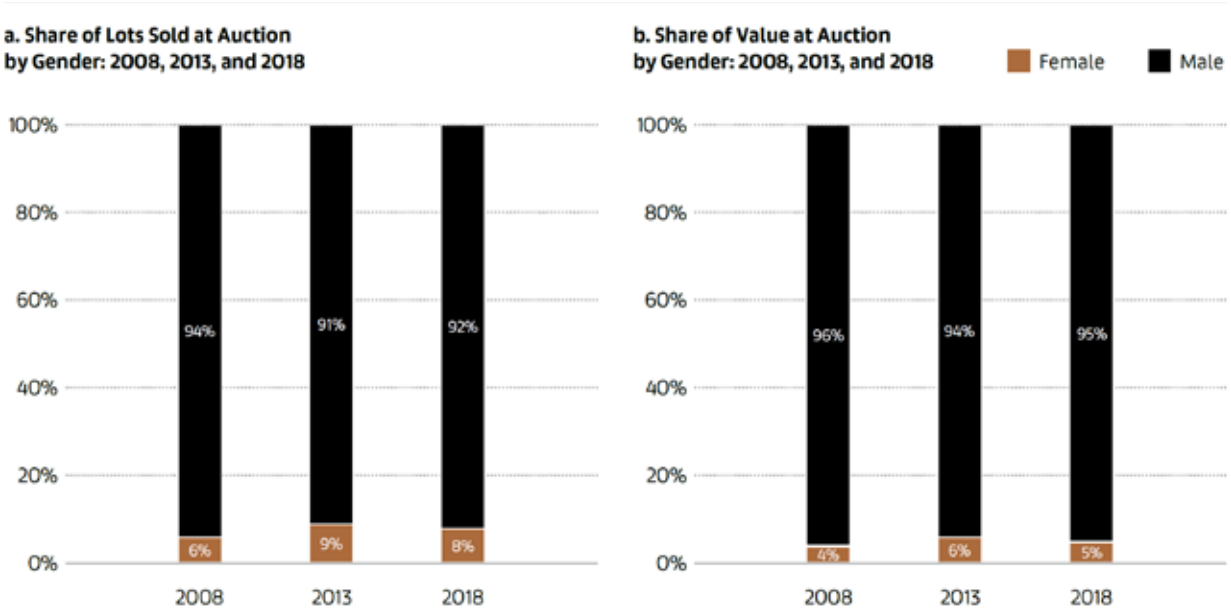


Graph 2: Billionaire Number and Wealth. Claire McAndrew, The Art Market 2022: An Art Basel and UBS Report (Basel: Art Basel and UBS, 2022), p 196.

What was very specific to the financial crisis caused by the pandemic, explains Dr. McAndrew, is that the number of billionaires continued to increase during the pandemic whereas number of billionaires dropped by 30% in the 2009 financial crisis.[5] This expansion of wealth of the ultra-rich and their acquisition decisions are also clearly visibly driving the 2022 sales figures. In the fine art auction section, sales from the high-end segment increased from 57% to 60%, while sales from the middle market and low-end segments decreased.

The "buying decisions" of the rich and ultra-rich targeted limited types of art mediums. For example, in the fine art auction section, 91% of the spending of the Ultra High Net Value Individual Spending (UHNVI)/$10M-above was for paintings and 6% for sculptures, and 80% of the High Net Value Individual Spending (HNVI)/$1M-$10M was for paintings and 8% for sculptures, resulting in inequalities for non-traditional art mediums such as film, video art, photography, and installations, which saw a minimal percentage of the market share. Traditional art mediums also led the sales in buyers' choices in the dealers' market, although there was an increase in sales of digital art by 4%; however, this increase was driven by NFT market. Overall, paintings, sculptures, and works on paper accounted for 82% of the total sales for fine art dealers.

Continuing with our reflection on the inequalities in acquisition choices, we can next look at how female artist representation has evolved in the last decade. There has been an improvement in the dealers' section in the number of female artists represented by each gallery, which is now 42% for dealers operating in the primary market and 38% for dealers operating in the primary and secondary markets. Nevertheless, these figures are still continuously lower than the representation of male artists, and the upward trend has halted in the last two years, dropping from 44% in 2019 to 42% in 2022. Female representation in the auction market continues to be significantly lower in comparison to male artists. It is, unfortunately, no surprise to say that no woman artist is yet on the list of the most expensive artists at auction. Female artists' works do not sell better now than a decade ago, says Dr. McAndrew in the 2020 Art Market Report, with just a 5% share of the sales in 2018 versus 4% in 2008.

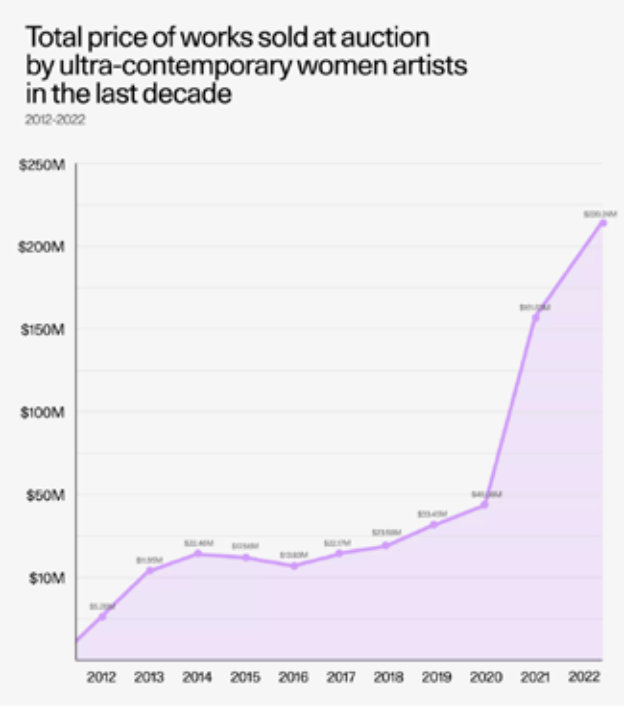


Graph 3: Gender Disparity Auctions. Claire McAndrew, The Art Market 2019: An Art Basel and UBS Report (Basel: Art Basel and UBS, 2019), p.167.

She continues by adding that, "The top 100 prices achieved at auction sales in 2018 were all by male artists. The price paid for works by those women leading sales in the auction market—such as Cecily Brown, Yayoi Kusama, and Joan Mitchell—is rarely more than half of that paid for works by top male artists. In most recent years, combined sales of female artists are less than 10% of the value of sales achieved by male artists."[6]

One improvement for female artists has been the increasing demand in the segment of ultra-contemporary artists, which is a term defined by Artnet News editors for artists who were born after 1975. [7]

In this segment, there has been an increase of 194% for women artists in the last decade, closing 2022 with sales of $220.6M. Still, to place this total value within the big picture of the dominant white male art market, one sole painting by Andy Warhol sold for $195M at auction in 2022.



Graph 4: Ultra Contemporary Women Artists_artsy.net. Casey Lesser, "The Ultra-Contemporary Women Artists at the Forefront of the Art Market," artsy.net, March 8, 2023, accessed June.

According to "The State of the Market for Women Artist's Work," research done by Artsy.net,[8] the sum total of the fifty most expensive works by women artists sold in auctions between 2012-2022 was $332.4M, and this sum of money would not allow us to purchase the two most expensive works by male artists sold in 2022: Andy Warhol's *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn* (1964) and Georges Seurat's *Les Poseuses, Ensemble* (1988) which sold for a combined $344.3M.

Picasso's sales figures, according to the *Art Newspaper*, achieved a total of $6.34 billion in the period of 2012-2022, whereas Yayoi Kusama, who was found to be the woman artist with the highest volume of works at auction over the past ten years, reached a total of $762M in sales for the same period.[9] Picasso was again the highest-selling artist in the modern art sector for the fifth consecutive year in 2022, with sales of $507 million, accounting for six of the top twenty lots, writes Lesser.

Value created around Picasso as an artist is accepted globally instead of being questioned. However, it was not like that in the beginning. Alfred Stieglitz, husband of the leading American artist Georgia O'Keeffe, had the first Picasso exhibition in New York in his gallery 291 in 1911. The artworks were immensely disliked by the public. Stieglitz sold only one of Picasso's paintings for $20 and bought one for himself for $40. Stieglitz offered the whole collection to the director of the Metropolitan Museum for $2000, but he refused to buy them, saying that such mad pictures would never mean anything.[10] Nevertheless, the valuation of his works skyrocketed over the following decades as he was accepted and branded as the genius artist of all time, assuring collectors that their money was always invested safely.

In the meantime, Picasso's relationships with women and his remarks, as noted by journalist Jackie Wullschläger, such as "artists who are homosexual cannot be true artists because they like men," or "woman is essentially a machine for suffering,"[11] or his appropriation of African masks and, through that, African culture in his famous *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,* have not proven to be a barrier to his success.

However, African American artist Faith Ringgold's painting titled *Picasso's Studio* (1991), as seen below, showing a Black model while Picasso is observing her, points out the hidden facts. Ringgold spoke of her work, "It's the African mask straight from African faces that I look at in Picasso's studio. He has the power to deny what he doesn't want to acknowledge. But art is the truth, not the artist."[12]

Faith Ringgold, *Picasso's Studio*, 1991, acrylic on canvas; printed and tie-dyed fabric, Charlotte E.W. Buffington Fund, 1998.148. © Faith Ringgold / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York.

According to the Burns Halperin Report, 2018 Edition, purchases and gifts of work of African American artists in the surveyed thirty top US museums between 2008-2018 accounted for 2.4 percent of all acquisitions.[13] However, the 2022 edition of the same report showed that between 2008-2020, this number dropped even further to 2.2 percent. The 2022 edition of the Burns Halperin Report stated that, "Perception of progress of diversity in the art world is largely a myth,"[14] highlighting that acquisitions for work by Black American artists peaked two years after the 2013 founding of the Black Lives Matter movement and that acquisitions of Black American female artists peaked in 2018, in the wake of the #MeToo movement in 2016 and 2017, pointing out overall that, "The best years are already behind us."[15]

This report focuses on museum acquisitions, which represent a very small percentage of sales in the art market, such as national museums that represents 4% of sales and international museums that represent 3% of sales in the dealers' market in 2022, and it is not a year-on-year comparison. However, it shows the clear trend of a small increase in representation and acquisitions, as well as showing the halt in the demand following the timelines of the movements. Most importantly, it shows how Black artists and moreover Black female artists have been significantly underrepresented in US museums. For instance, based on the 2022 edition, only 0.5 percent of the museum acquisitions made were of Black female artists despite the fact that Black American women represent 6.6 percent of the population.

When we look at the artists represented by a branded gallery like Hauser & Wirth, we see that eight out of fifty-nine living artists represented today are African Americans, which is close to 14%, and according to the 2022 edition of the Burns Halperin Report, Black Americans represent 13.6 percent of the US population. We still need more data and reporting in art business to identify and question underrepresentation in a wider spectrum with a goal to diminish it.

Behind the numbers represented so far lie the predictions that Velthuis made a decade ago coming true, but also we do see movements of change. Lets have a look some of these predictions. The principal actors of the art market continue to be dealers and auction houses with increased competition between them, also fueled by inventories of certain genres drying up in the late '90s and as a result dealers also crossing over into the secondary market as a source of increased income.

Ethics of Collecting, Pablo Helguera, 2022. Courtesy of the artist

The branded dealer continues to manage the long-term career of a mature artist by "placing works with collectors, taking it to art fairs, placing it with dealers in other countries," as also noted by Thompson in his book, *The $12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*. Dealers execute all the marketing, advertising, and public relations activities, as well as managing exhibitions and loans for their artists.[16] Not surprisingly, the majority of the sales for dealers have only came from a few artists, if not from one star artist. In 2018, 63% of the sales for dealers in the primary market came from the top three artists. Nevertheless, due to the desire to diversify as well as with advancements in digital platforms, this number has dropped to 56% in 2022.[17]

New York is still the center of the art market. In 2022, 86% of the top fifty lots were sold in New York, and Art Basel is still the most important art fair. At Art Basel 2022, Hauser & Wirth sold Louise Bourgeois's steel version of *Spider* for $40 million during the Swiss fair's first VIP Day.[18] Sotheby's and Christie's continue to dominate the auction market with an increasing total market share.

Previously, the value in the art market used to be determined by art critics and art experts. As Pierre Bourdieu has explained, art critics produced belief in the artist's work in which the symbolic value was exchanged for economic value.[19] However, now within the changing regimes of the art market, there is a shift from the dealer-critic system to the dealer-collector system, notes Isabelle Graw.[20] Within this new regime, the price paid for an artwork defines an artist's reputation, not the other way around, giving the branded collector the power to make or break an artist's career.

Despite this shift, collectors still need to pay attention to art publications, follow public museum agendas, and attend art fairs and internationally curated exhibitions in which dealers work hard to implement their artists to proactively shape the collectors' choices. In the end, collectors need a lot of assurance because, most of the time, they lack the cultural capital, and the art market with its current configurations makes it very difficult to see how margins are made. There is a lack of trust as well as an asymmetry of information. Therefore, instead of trusting their own instincts and supporting young artists, most collectors buy artworks of already established artists following the choices of other collectors, dealers, or art advisors.

Velthuis stated that the main motive for collectors in buying art is love of art, which reminded me of the Ganz family who bought their first Picasso, *Le Rêve*, for $7000 in 1932, equaling their rent for the next two years. Their motive, as explained by their daughter with one word, was "love."[21] Nevertheless, in today's art world, I would argue that the utopian idea of collecting art due to love can be the main driver for collecting. It is not, although I agree that it does require a passion to engage and immerse oneself in the art market to make the right acquisitions. But this requires a systematic and strategic collection of information as well as a self-education even for a HNW Individual.

Ethics of Collecting, Pablo Helguera, 2022. Courtesy of the artist

François Pinault started his career in the family-owned timber business at the age of 16. By the 1970s, he was buying timber companies that were in bankruptcy. By the 1980s, he was known in the industry as the King of Wood. Then, he crossed over into the retail industry by buying shares in various French companies and then shifted his focus from retail into luxury by buying stakes or full ownership of well-known, high-end brands such as Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, Boucheron, and Balenciaga. In the meantime, he started acquiring artworks in the 1980s as well, and on top of that he bought the auction house Christie's in 1998. He first bought works of major artists then developed a specific focus on contemporary art.

Currently, he owns over 10,000 artworks presented in his three museums. At the beginning, he was not supported in France to find a space to showcase his collection. Therefore, he took his mission to Venice and bought two buildings and rebuilt them in 2006 and 2009. His most respectable artworks are currently being presented in the Palazzo Grassi and Punta Della Dogana in Venice and also now in his new museum, the Bourse de Commerce, which opened in Paris in 2020. Pinault is no longer remembered as the King of Wood thanks to his acquired cultural capital through his art collection.
The system of patronage existed even before the birth of art market as we know it. Either it was the institution of medieval guilds or the Church before and after the Renaissance, the landlords who were commissioning the artworks. What has changed in today's art market is, with the increase of the wealth of billionaires, on top of their active involvement in the art market as commissioners of new works, awarding curatorial positions and residencies, funding museum exhibitions, and heading up major institutional boards, these collectors have increasingly started to establish their own museums, institutions and galleries like Pinault's.

The Broad Art Foundation was established in 1984 by Eli and Edythe Broad and currently exhibits $2.2 billion worth of contemporary art in Los Angeles. Rosa de la Cruz, a Cuban American businesswoman, has established the de la Cruz Collection, which is a 10,000m^2 museum dedicated to contemporary art in Miami. Grażyna Kulczyk, who is listed in ARTnews' top 200 collectors list and represents Switzerland as well as Poland, is the founder of Museum Susch in Switzerland. In 2014, Forbes named Sheikha Mayassa Al Thani, who is the chair of Qatar Museums, as the undisputed queen of the art world.

Ursula Hauser, Swiss collector talked about her transition from business world to art world in her book *The Inner Mirror* in which she said that she worked every day for almost twenty years for the family company Fust, which sold household appliances. Then, she met her business partner Iwan Wirth at the end of the 1980s while he was around 16-17 years old and studying for his baccalaureate. She mentions in her book how much she learned from Wirth from the start, saying, "He showed and explained so much to me. He was self-taught, but always extremely well informed."[21] Throughout the years she interacted directly with artists to build her private collection with artworks from Louise Bourgeois, Carol Rama, Alina Szapocznikow, and Franz West. And in 1992, as well as she co-founded the gallery Hauser & Wirth.

Where does this leave the artistic sphere that involves not only artists as creatives but also curators, art educators, historians, and institutional and cultural art workers? Gregory Sholette explains that "there is a creative dark matter that makes up the bulk of the artistic activity in our society, and this artistic dark matter reproduces the material and symbolic economy of high art. Just like the physical world is dependent on dark matter and its energy, the art market also depends on its shadow creativity."[23]

While the surplus[24] of this shadow creativity feeds the mainstream with new forms and styles that can be commercialized. Sholette explains that "the dark matter provides the narratives, institutions, and political economy of contemporary art" [25].

The disconnect between artistic sphere and the high end of the art market is quite prominent to me. It is my view that these two structures, although they exist within the same sphere, do not know each other's worlds well enough. For changes to happen, these two ends need to be communicating with each other more frequently, hence they should know each other's languages in more depth to do so.

This is completely the opposite in the current art market. When we look at the art advisors and who they are, we see that they are either veterans of auction houses such as Sotheby's or Christie's, or they are veterans of branded art galleries or or it can be that they are ex-curators of major art institutions.

Ethics of Collecting. Pablo Helguera, 2022. Courtesy of the artist

Philip Hoffman, former CEO of Christie's Europe, is the founder of The Fine Art Group that employs 100 people, of which 30 are former Sotheby's or Christie's employees. The Fine Art Group advises over 300 families in 28 countries. Patti Wong manages an Asia-focused agency in Hong Kong, has thirty years of experience and collector contacts from Sotheby's. In 2019, Gagosian launched Gagosian Art Advisory. It is headed up by Laura Paulson, former global chairman of Christie's. Allan Schwartzman, who was the former curator at New York's New Museum, and his partners set up Art Agency Partners. Two years later, this Agency was bought by Sotheby's for $85 million.[26]

The facts and figures presented so far show a configuration of an art market that lacks regulations, transparency, and ethical frameworks. It operates with secrecy and anonymity on the high end and for that the middle and low ends of the market pays the penalty. The lack of trust that exists in the nature of the art market is used as agency by market's key players to feed the taste-making art machine.

Any tiny movement toward democratization of the art market that we can trace in today's art market is a driven by production in the artistic sphere. We cannot measure this impact in numbers due to the lack of reporting. Current statistical art market reports are executed with a focus on global wealth. Showcasing categories of under-representation within these reports are limited and not the main goal. Nevertheless, we can still follow the outcome of the work of the artistic sphere through academic institutions, art institutions, cultural platforms, artistic collectives, and off-spaces. The role of these institutions and the governmental, social, and financial support they

require therefore continues to be crucial. Because if it was left to the initiative of the art market players consisting of auction houses, galleries and collectors, then certain mediums of art and the institutions supporting these mediums would have vanished, such as video art or installations which represent a 1% segment of dealer sales in 2022.[27] Photography, with 3% [28] of the sales, would also have not continued to exist.

As a final remark, I want to underline that the art market, with annual sales of $64-$68 billion, is not a big industry, but it is rightly characterized as having resilience and perseverance. We can trace these character traits in past financial crises such as in the way the market recovered as it did after the Covid pandemic. I would also add to that by saying that the art market can be characterized by its adaptability. But there is a "but". For the art market to change rapidly and to adapt itself, in my view, its survival must depend on it. For example, before the pandemic, online sales platforms accounted for only 9% of total sales; however, during the pandemic, online sales reached 25%.[29] It is proof that the market can achieve big changes in short periods of time.

As we are in the early weeks of 2024, 2023 market indications are slowly becoming apparent. Soon, it will be possible to see how the high interest rates, rising inflation, and ongoing wars have been impacting the art market and its key players in this past year. Collectors have been acting with more caution. Will the 2022 sales figure be reached in 2023? Will the representation of women artists increase in 2023? Will the gap of underrepresentation of artists and artworkers based on gender, race, and geography change positively in 2023? We will be able to find answers to some of these questions in the next months.

But now, I would like to turn the question to you: What do you think is next for the art market, and what will the next ten years look like? I will leave you with that question.

Notes

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21 Alastair Sooke, writer and host, *The World's Most Expensive Paintings,* directed by Russell England (IWC Media, 2011), 60 min.
22 Laura Bechter and Michaela Unterdörfer, *The Inner Mirror: Conversations with Ursula Hauser, Art Collector* (Zurich: Hauser & Wirth Publications, 2019), 43-49.
23 Gregory Sholette, "Dark Matter and the Counter-Public Sphere," NeME, February 2, 2006, accessed June 14, 2023, https://www.neme.org/texts/dark-matter.
24 This refers to the Marxian view of surplus value, which represents the undistributed wealth of labor that goes to the capitalist regime but not to the worker who creates the added value. In this context, it is the surplus of the production of work undertaken by those in the artistic sphere who are underpaid and overworked.
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Forces of Art: Monitoring and Evaluation as a Situated Knowledge-Making Practice

Laura Alexander and Myriam Vandenbroucke

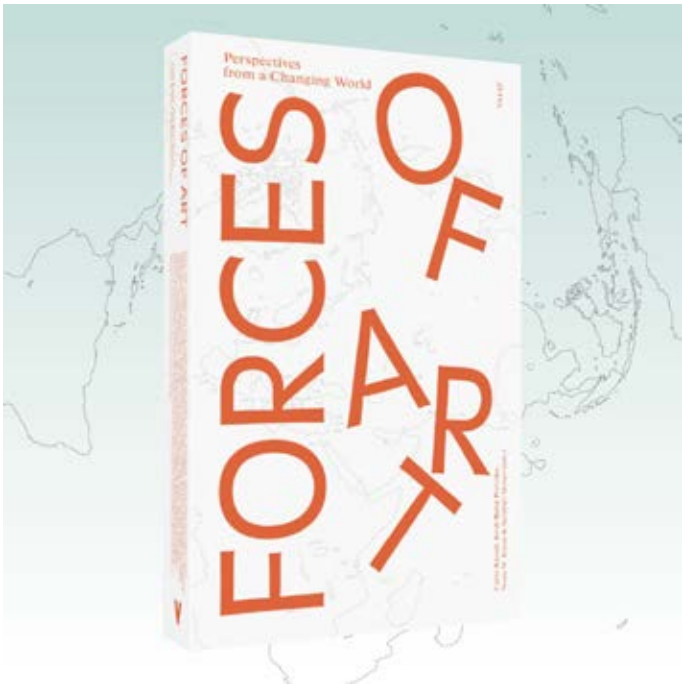
Both the day-to-day and the long-term strategic work of funders in the arts depend on a constantly evolving body of knowledge. Institutions engaged in issuing grants, awards, fellowships, and many other forms of support to artists and cultural practitioners need a nuanced understanding of the needs of those supported, the contexts in which they live and work, and the possible logics of change that might be possible in these contexts. The consequences of decision-making based on inaccurate or irrelevant information range from risking a waste of precious resources to actively creating or enabling harm, for instance, by distributing funding in a way that entrenches existing inequalities, or by pushing cultural practitioners into difficult situations in exchange for support.

The work of building or making this knowledge[1] takes place throughout the working processes of funders, and this knowledge in turn informs and shapes the work of funders at every stage. A flexible and nuanced understanding of artists, their work, and their social, economic, or political contexts plays a role in the work that is done by informing processes and ensuring accountability. As well as shaping the decisions that are made, this knowledge is passed on through reporting to whatever donors the funding institution itself is accountable to and forms the basis for most fundraising efforts.

Our discussion here of the knowledge-making practices of funders is rooted in our own experience working within funding institutions, and in particular with the Amsterdam-based Prince Claus Fund. Through the long-term project Forces of Art (on which we reflect below), we became interested in considering funders' practices of knowledge-making. These practices are constituted by techniques both of *sensing* (data-gathering, collecting, determining who has access to information) and of *sense-making* (analysis, synthesis, abstracting, putting-in-context).[2]

This work takes place at different levels of the organisation. Individuals working within these organisations bring, of course, their personal experiences and knowledge and it is for this reason that internal diversity within institutions is so vital. Furthermore, every interaction between funding institutions and those they support, even the most informal, creates knowledge that is often passed on through conversation or hearsay.

Both sensing and sense-making take place most systematically, however, through the collection and interpretation of the planned reports required of beneficiaries, as well as surveys and (more rarely) interviews. This task, which typically goes under the unglamorous name of "Monitoring and Evaluation" ("M&E"), or some variation thereof, presents challenges on different levels, both practical[3] and epistemological. Within the day-to-day work of arts funding, we gather information on the work done with our funds and (to a certain extent) in our name. Next, we need to synthesise the information gathered into a coherent account that can help us improve our processes, meet our obligations regarding accountability and expected impact, and raise funds from



Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World, edited by Carin Kuoni, Jordi Baltà Portolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses, 2020

our own donors. In recent years, we have come to understand more deeply that the knowledge created through this work should also be relevant or useful to our partners, their own practice, and be shared (back) with them in an overarching/holistic way.

While unravelling this central place of knowledge in the work of funders, we came to ask how the methodologies of knowledge-making typically available to funders, and the conditions under which they are used, shape the work of these institutions. A larger question has guided our thinking without us yet being in a position to answer it: what kinds of knowledge are funders positioned to develop, and from where do limits on this knowledge derive?

These concerns were behind the setting up of Forces of Art, an international research project that examines the ways in which artistic and cultural activities shape their own societies. It was initiated jointly in 2018 by the Prince Claus Fund, Hivos, and the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), three foundations that support culture internationally. The goal in the first stages of Forces of Art was to avoid preconceived notions of "success" and impact and instead examine the ways in which art reveals its transformative force for and within societies. Fifteen academic and non-academic research teams from across the globe studied one or several cases that had been funded by one of the commissioning foundations between 2008 and 2018. All studies were conducted from each of the researcher's own theoretical premises and using their own unique methodologies, including artistic research practices. The resulting book *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World* is a multi-layered reading showcasing a multiplicity of voices and perspectives on how the forces of art reveal themselves.[4] While a summary cannot possibly capture the multiplicity of voices, perspectives, and insights from the book, we will share below in this article three recurring topics that were key to kickstarting a learning journey on translations to our funding practice.

With hindsight, we identify another driving force behind the Forces of Art initiative—opening up the ways that we as funders generated knowledge and insight, and in so doing, seeing our regular knowledge-making practices in a different, unfamiliar way. We have come to understand M&E procedures as attempted solutions to a basic epistemological problem, that of how funders can come to "know" the impact of their work, both on those they support and on the social, political, or economic contexts around them.

To consider M&E practices through this lens, we draw on Donna Haraway's concept of *situated knowledges*, which offers a way out of what she describes as "a tempting dichotomy on the question of objectivity" between supposedly disembodied objective knowledge, traditionally represented by the white male authority figure, and an extreme relativist position that views all categorical statements as expressions of patriarchal power relations.[5] Haraway frames her description of situated knowledge-building projects through the metaphor of *seeing*, appealing to the embodied nature of vision to describe objective knowledge as necessarily the product of perspectives that understand themselves as partial.

While these questions emerge naturally from the specific dynamics of the funder-recipient relationship, some of them seem to us to be most urgent in the context of funding within differentials of power and privilege. In particular, organisations based within the former colonial powers of the Global North that support work in the rest of the world must confront the fact that the position occupied by the European or North American funding institutions is precisely the one that has been assumed to be neutral and unmediated. The racist, patriarchal culture that has historically ascribed objectivity to white male perspectives similarly positions European or North American institutions as objective observers of those with whom they work in the Global South. As we wrote in our closing reflection to *Forces of Art*, this assumption of a neutral perspective can too easily be perpetuated by funders in their understanding of themselves.

For this reason, we find it important to attempt a description of how the funder's perspective is situated, to problematize it to ourselves as well as to others. Such a description is necessarily incomplete but must begin from the geographic and epistemic distance between the funder which (like the Prince Claus Fund) supports artists and practitioners in the Global South while being located in the Global North, and those who receive funding from it. The funder's perspective occupies an ambiguous space between two constructed spheres: the international art world and the world of so-called "development," each of which comes with their own ways of seeing. For funders, this position can incentivise the flattening of creative identities for the purpose of "being fundable," as Fatin Farhat points out in her contribution to *Forces of Art*.[6]

Meanwhile, the power held by a funder over those it supports, and its capacity to shape the lives of others with the tap of a keyboard, is a part of the conditions under which both sensing and sense-making take place. In this article, we argue that this position inevitably shapes the information that becomes known to funders, both intentionally through planned reporting requirements, surveys, and interviews, and ad hoc through conversation and hearsay. Furthermore, it shapes the ways in which this information is interpreted and synthesised to become part of the more general understanding funders have of themselves and their impact on the world around them.

In making these arguments, we are not speaking as disinterested investigators but as practitioners engaged in the work of knowledge-making from within a specific funding

institution. The Prince Claus Fund has been supporting artists and cultural practitioners in places around the world where culture is under pressure since 1996, with a focus on socially engaged art that contributes to a better world. The Prince Claus Fund has since the beginning of last year moved towards a new set of strategic choices in terms of how we fulfil our aim of supporting artists. Instead of funding one-off artistic projects, with set plans and objectives, as we had done, we have moved towards investing in individual artists and cultural practitioners at different levels of their careers through three categories of Prince Claus Awards. These awards represent an un-earmarked investment in the development of our award recipients' practices, without the expectation of specific productions or results. We see this new way of working as a shift away from a focus on the production of specific works towards an investment in processes.

This strategic shift on the part of the Prince Claus Fund has presented a wonderful opportunity and a challenge. How do we build and use knowledge, respectfully and collaboratively? How do the choices we make impact those we aim to serve? And what can we be doing to make our encounters with those we support safe and just, given the fundamental power disparity inherent to the dynamic between funder and funded?

The Forces of Art and the "M&E Gaze"

First of all, Forces of Art also helps in starting to formulate answers to some of our broader questions around what kinds of knowledge funders can develop and, specifically, what are the limits to this knowledge. The process of Forces of Art made possible situated knowledge-making that would not be possible in usual M&E practices. The research was conducted by more than 30 researchers from different contexts, who studied more than 45 diverse organisations that had been funded. Although the range of methodologies used was broad,[7] almost all were characterised by a collaborativeness far beyond typical M&E carried out by funders (or research consultants employed by funders). The result was a multiplicity of situated knowledge among many actors, places, methods, and agencies, disturbing the idea of neutral disembodied knowledge on a very practical level.

Next, Forces of Art answers our questions on how to build knowledge respectfully while doing justice to the transformative force of work done and created by artists and cultural practitioners. Firstly, the majority of chapters from the *Forces of Art* book highlight that an *affective encounter* is the key force of artistic work. Failure to properly account for this force may lead to the unfair dismissal of artistic practices. The question we then asked ourselves is: How can we learn to centre affective encounters[8] in monitoring and evaluations practices?

The second insight was around solidarity. *Working in solidarity* is based on the idea of shared beliefs, values, and goals between funders and funded. However, structures of power beyond that relationship complicate the goal of reaching solidarity,[9] especially when values are not clearly communicated. So, we asked, can a form of solidarity be reached between funders and the funded that circumvents or even undermines the aid model of the traditional development sphere? Finally, we realised that *decentralised processes*—as both physical decentralisation and the decentralisation of structural hierarchies—play an important role in achieving affect-focused practice and solidarity.[10]

The Forces of Art project and insights created a wider opportunity to have honest conversations about funding practices. Therefore, the Prince Claus Fund initiated a series of online learning sessions[11] in 2022, together with a group of nineteen funders from around the globe. Among participating funders, there was a sense of an urgent need to

create a space of trust between different funders confronting these issues in their own contexts. As presented at the OnCurating conference "Speculations on Funding" (Kassel, 29 June 2022), we came to a set of preliminary conclusions that should immediately inform our practice and at the same time be regularly reviewed for their correct implementation and continued relevance. A recurring topic was that we need to acknowledge the type of relationship we are in and that this comes with certain power dynamics. We need to rethink how we can share power as well as risks. Sharing responsibility is at the core of a caring relationship, according to Barbara Lehtna, "when one sees both partners in a relationship as equally capable of sharing the responsibility of whatever happens next."[12, 13] Related to insights on power dynamics, we realised that we needed to engage with art on its own terms. Instead of reading artwork through a simplistic framework of social impact, approach artistic work in its entirety as an aesthetic experience and process. Specifically, we need to be cautious of applying overarching global frameworks to fundamentally local questions without stopping to listen to where they might not fit. Therefore, we should make suggestions, rather than impose conditions, and leave room for unexpected interpretations, ideas, and concepts, instead of being prescriptive on content.

Recipient of Seed Awards 2023 Luis M. S. Santos, *TV Contraption*, 2022

Another conclusion from our structured conversations with other funders was that we realised that both funders and artists experience anxieties: among funders, this is driven by a fear of feeling out of control (about how money is spent and its impact) and artists—as we understood it—experience fears around budgets and imposed expectations. How can we connect around these fears? One way forward is definitely to be clear and transparent in language: the jargon used within funding practices can easily be misinterpreted and is experienced as an imposition by many.

Finally, and this is what immediately led us to the core of this article, we learned we should treat monitoring and evaluation as a mode of knowledge-making and sharing, not of control.

Many of these points emphasise the importance of human dialogue[14] in order to improve our relationships, grant schemes, and M&E. Our funding institutions need to create space for that. Višnja Kisić and Goran Tomka, researchers in the Forces of Art project, advised: "Use funding situations as opportunities for honest encounters, for understanding, experiencing and searching for alternative ways to live and create, rather than developing or changing according to pre-set ideas, measures and standards. Because funding should be much more about changing oneself than changing others."[15] The learnings from the Forces of Art initiative and subsequent conversations have opened up space within our work as a Fund and as a team (since 2021, renamed the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team), to find a deeper understanding of both our own needs and the needs of the artists we support. This process coincided with the Prince Claus Fund's strategic shift from support for projects with definite outputs to investing in the process of artistic development, and new procedures were needed to help us build knowledge meaningfully and respectfully about the effect this new work would have on the people we hoped to support.

The research clarified our sense of something we are provisionally calling the "M&E gaze," a totalising way of looking at artistic work that prioritises final endpoints over processes, and holds people to artificial standards imposed on them from outside, against which they are judged by disinterested observers looking from within centralised international institutions. It is this mode of seeing, we argue, that shapes a way of working in which monitoring and evaluation is a necessary evil at best, and at worst actively harmful or violent. This perception was reflected back to us in several contributions to *Forces of Art*. This gaze leaves little room for moments of surprise, playfulness, or contemplation, or for the collective creation of a practice and the unfolding of assemblages, as Nadia Moreno Moya and Fernando Escobar Neira put it.[16]

The pressure on artists to distort their work to meet the standards of this M&E gaze has harmful consequences for artists and artistic ecosystems—among others, it forces artists to invest time and labour that may be in short supply into applications and reports that do not benefit them, their processes, or their communities, and may even alienate them. It also creates a force within artistic ecosystems that disproportionately rewards those who are more able, or who are willing, to distort their work—at least on paper—into these formats.

The harmful impact of this gaze on artists and practitioners around the world is clear and has been frequently discussed. However, we argue that the limiting of funders' knowledge-making practice to this way of seeing also stands in the way of funders' own goals, creating blinkers that stand in the way of truly informed decision-making. Furthermore, its focus on unambiguously demonstrable effects of artistic production

can produce impossible standards, facilitating the dismissal of artistic practices as not contributing sufficiently to a certain desired result.

Although a fuller description of the history of this mode of seeing is beyond the scope of this short article, it is worth stating that we do not believe that the "M&E gaze" arises spontaneously from funders. Institutions supporting artistic work on a global scale are faced with the pressure to justify their work and, in most cases, to fundraise for themselves from back-donors unlikely to be convinced solely by appeals to the inherent worth of artistic practice. They must therefore be able to speak about their work in a language that is legible to, for example, the broader international development sphere much of which is still predicated on an uncomplicated "aid"-based model. There is a real risk of damaging relationships or losing access to vital funding if we reject the pressure to deliver "results" that are legible to these bodies.

While very real pressures on funders create the need to code switch, and use certain pre-set categorical languages, we argue for the need to problematise those categories. The M&E gaze as the governing mode of funders' knowledge-making requires exactly the opposite of the situated knowledge discussed above from its practitioners. She or he must maintain an affect of objectivity, which becomes equated with professionalism within the working spheres of funders. Working within this mode makes it difficult, if not impossible, to access the affective encounters that are at the heart of artistic practice. Without the capacity to participate in these affective encounters with artists and with art, the observing eye of the funder misses the core aspects of its own work, leaving the knowledge-making project not just incomplete, but focused on the most trivial aspects of what is to be investigated.[17]

We argue that finding a way of doing monitoring and evaluation as a knowledge-making practice that is sensitive to the ways in which "the conditions of investigation shape what can be known"[18] also means developing a view of the system of funding in which we see ourselves as subject to the gaze of others, open to critique. If it is the case that there is no unmediated perceptual system, that all ways of seeing are shaped by the specific standpoint from which the seeing is done, what can be said of the kind of seeing that is done by an arts funder? We should search for a mode of perception that can perceive not the incidental but the core value of artistic work, while acknowledging its own perspective as partial.

Beginnings of New Practices

Almost by definition, developing new forms of collaborative knowledge-making[19] is a work-in-progress that will require a certain amount of experimentation. However, it is clear that whatever forms we might find should be rooted in collaboration with those we support. Collaborative knowledge-making might present an alternative to the blindly partial perspective of the M&E gaze, aspiring to a constantly shifting intersubjective network of knowledge, instead of an unattainable objectivity from nowhere. Following Haraway, we might see our situated perspective as a starting point for joining together with the perspectives of others, to "see together without claiming to be another"[20]." Such a methodology of knowledge-making could adapt itself to meet the needs of practitioners and allow for the resulting data to be held in common between funders and those they support. Mariam Abou Ghazi and Ilka Eickhof critically highlight the role of beneficiaries in both sensing and sense-making in *Forces of Art*: "How can we become a professional if we don't have access to our data?"[21]

Forces of Art, with its inclusion of academic research methodologies like participant observation, (auto)ethnography, long, unstructured conversation, and artistic research—and above all its long-term perspective—was one of the key inspirations in developing our new M&E protocol. The process of working on the book helped us understand new ways of thinking that might be able to hold space for different experiences and perspectives, while minimising the burden evaluation puts on partners.

Our new protocol will combine minimal reporting with qualitative research in the form of personal interviews with a randomly sampled selection of the artists and practitioners we support. This approach will aim to focus the evaluative eye on ourselves, instead of on our partners. Instead of evaluating the work of our partners according to our own standards, we want to find ways to learn together with them. Building on our desire to foster long-term thinking, we want these conversations to cover a longer period than the short-term results imposed by the "M&E gaze." At this point, we are planning on scheduling annual conversations with each subject over a period of three years. We hope this commitment will enable us to start to follow the impact of our work as it develops or dissipates over time within the complex systems of the arts ecosystem(s). We hope that these interviews will be informal and relational dialogues—spaces in which the people we are talking with can question and challenge us as well as the other way round, and we also want them to be spaces in which genuine affective encounters can take place. The work of sense-making, of synthesising and interpreting the information gathered in this way must also be re-evaluated. Instead of centring linear stories of the philanthropic interventions of funders, we must seek to tell stories that illuminate the impact of our work precisely as one actor within a network of many perspectives and narratives.

Finding such a way to tell the story of what we do does not stand in the way of the practical needs that drive our knowledge-making—of informing our processes, being accountable, and raising funds from our own donors. These tasks must be done, rigorously and with care. But the burden of this rigour needs to be on us, not our partners, and it should not be in the way of finding the unexpected.

Conclusion

Reframing the day-to-day work of monitoring and evaluation as a situated knowledge-making project opens up the possibilities of new methodologies and aims. The specific positionality of the Prince Claus Fund, a funder of artistic work across the majority world, located in and observing from one of the former colonial powers of western Europe, makes understanding the limitations of our knowledge essential. If we are sensitive to the ways in which the conditions of doing M&E shape what knowledge can be derived from it, we can develop more collaborative methods of coming to understand our own work. Such methods would help to reshape power relations between funders and funded, make space for affects and solidarities, and lead towards more vibrant creative forces rather than flattening creative identities.

At the same time, we can develop a view of the system of funding in which we see ourselves as one part among many, subject to the gaze of others. However well imagined, good policies are meaningless unless they are implemented in the right spirit. The spirit we want to embody is to always be learning, to be as transparent as needed, not to be a burden on our partners, but evaluating ourselves as opposed to those we support. The research and conversations that led to this contribution took place on and off in more closed funder circles and are continuing with artists, practitioners, and researchers. We are talking about relationships between funders and beneficiaries that

are sometimes very intimate or personal, and therefore all the more should be shaped by both. Where we are now still represents the beginning of a process.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 It is worth distinguishing the knowledge-making referred to here from the practice of 'knowledge management',the management of information collected through Monitoring & Evaluation practices (eg. Talisayon, 2009 Ref 3).

2 Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth* (London; New York: Verso, 2021)., 33-35

3 Serafin D Talisayon, 'Monitoring and Evaluation in Knowledge Management for Development.' *IKM Working Paper*, No. 3, (2009)

4 Carin Kuoni, Jordi Baltà Portolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses, eds., *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020).

5 Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575

6 Fatin Farhat "Syrian Artists Outside Syria: Conflicts, Challenges and Possibilities for Artists working in Displacement" in *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World*, eds. Kuoni, Carin, Jordi Baltà Portolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020), 359-382

7 Ranging from dinner conversations to the production of new artwork, as well as observations and conversations on site, e.g., in a library.

8 Judith Naeff, Arnout van Ree, Lenneke Sipkes, Cristiana Strava, Kasper Tromp, Mark R. Westmoreland "Dissonant Entanglements and Creative Redistributions" in *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World*, eds. Kuoni, Carin, Jordi Baltà Portolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020), 95-121

9 Mariam Abou Ghazi, Ilka Eickhof "Criticism is a Luxury: On the Effect of Evaluations" in *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World*, eds. Kuoni, Carin, Jordi Baltà Portolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020), 185-210

10 Kabelo Malatsie "Network(ing) from Lima to Johannesburg" in *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World*, eds. Kuoni, Carin, Jordi Baltà Portolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020), 385-402

11 As part of this learning journey, the participating funders conducted a mini-research project among artists in their portfolio. This, together with ongoing exchanges with Forces of Art researchers and practitioners, informed a lot of our insights and directions of our thinking.

12 Barbara Lehtna, "On Care: Denouncing Mothering," APRIA, October 21, 2021, accessed August 9, 2022, https://apria.artez.nl/on-care/.

13 Our event 'Forces of Art - Exploring New Models of Care Taking for the Funding Ecosystem', also taught us how to recognize a care-based relationship.

14 Likewise, an independent assessment by Myriam Vandenbroucke in October 2021 among nine organisations in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, and Egypt that receive grants from an international funder showed that each of them uses internal and community in-person dialogues to self-evaluate their work—a practice that should inform ME&L systems among international funders.
15 Quote from participant of *Forces of Art - one year later*, facilitated by Myriam Vandenbroucke and Dasha Spasojevic. Attended by Forces of Art researchers, practitioners and collaborating funders (PCF, Hivos and European Cultural Foundation) 26 November 2021.
16 Nadia Moreno Moya, Fernando Escobar Neira, "Making 'The Common': Arts Practices and Social Processes in Latin America" in *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World*, eds. Kuoni, Carin, Jordi Baltà Portolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020), 25-48
17 Eleonora Belfiore, "Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8, no. 1 (2002): 91–106.
18 Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman. *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth*. First published. London New York: Verso, 2021, 173
19 See also Pascal Gielen, "Management of Distrust: Measuring and Monitoring in Policymaking: Interview with Pascal Gielen," *Kunstlicht* 37, no. 1: Cultural Policies of Impact (2016).
20 Donna Haraway, *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective* in *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988), 586
21 Mariam Abou Ghazi, Ilka Eickhof, "Criticism is a Luxury: On the Effect of Evaluations" in *Forces of Art: Perspectives from a Changing World*, eds. Kuoni, Carin, Jordi Baltà Portolés, Nora N. Khan, and Serubiri Moses (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020), 185-210

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Myriam Vandenbroucke works as an independent consultant in the field of impact research and impact management, to contribute to the development of initiatives at the intersection of art, culture and societal opportunities. Her research centers around the question how the transformative force of art can be revealed and varies from more classical evaluations to learning journeys. After her PhD in Cognitive Neuroscience (2008), Myriam Vandenbroucke gained experience as a researcher in a wide range of sectors and institutions, from the arts sector, to juvenile detention centers, government, trade unions and the UN. She worked in several countries in Africa, the Middle East, Indonesia, and the Netherlands. As a Monitoring and Evaluation officer in the Resources of Open Minds programma (2017 - 2020), she got acquainted with the role of arts in freedom of expression and was a core member of the working group for the Forces of Art project.

What Is Autonomy, and for Whom Is Autonomy?

Antonio Cataldo

In the following text, I will speak about economy and autonomy, inspired by my grandparents, who, close to a century ago, managed to find forms of freedom and dignity under the most challenging circumstances when state and local authorities used and misused the meaning of what is to be human. In the past few years, I have interwoven personal storytelling in formal essays, not for empathy or egotistical reasons, but to bring to attention and make visible the intersection of one's life and societal infrastructure, determining who has the right to speak mostly under specific economic underpinnings.

* * *

These days I think about my maternal grandfather, a statuesque man whom I mostly remember as pensive, silent, and not at work. He must have been already past his 70s in my conscious encounters and memories of him. I interviewed him when I was 10 or 12 for a school assignment about WWII. There was a strong sense of identity and language in the little town where my parents had their roots. An oral history in which the maestros—primary school teachers—self-invested themselves with great honorary power to master the grand narrative of the small town: writing down its language and the local history of the Hirpini, an ancient Samnite tribe of Southern Italy, preceding the settling in the area of the Romans. The maestros extended the town's origins to prehistory, coinciding with the basis of the currently spoken language—today on the edge of disappearance. They would write down the words' phonetics of the local dialect, annotating peasants' recipes and creating tradition, belonging and land resources, poverty, and dependency on the Lords of Naples who actually held absolute power over the entire *entroterra* (the "natural" resources of the inland underground and overground of these inhabited lands). The feudal system had never really stopped and was still strong in the 1980s. Italy as a nation continues to be a collection of multiple cultures and people who never settled for a majority identity. I was a child from the North, relocated to the South, and alien to all sorts of traditions. I was also learning about the local people, like my parents, who despised these textbook recipes because of the reminders of times when there was not enough food.

My grandfather had been a prisoner of war in Russia. As I recall, he would tell me how he was dehumanized, ate potato peels for four years before the war was over in 1945, and was released and was able to return home. Illiteracy was prevalent, conscription was widespread for men aged 18–44, and communication with their towns and families relied on word of mouth. Suddenly, a generic narration of wars from time past construed in the Italian official schoolbooks cut so close and factual, as it changed the course of his life. And I believe he considered himself lucky because he had both survived and didn't have to continue serving at the front, where the chances of surviving would have been even smaller.

I think about my grandfather because of my grandmothers. Aged 97 and 96, they are a living representation of a time when people were valued only based on their "provenance." My paternal grandmother fell in her house a few days ago. Close to two

decades ago, she also fell from a tree in her 70s while heading away from her home in town, where she had relocated after my grandfather's passing, to visit her old countryside house and work in the orchard. Her leg took months to heal. No one can take care of her because of her strong will, self-sufficiency, and temperament. She eventually recovered, like she has done multiple times throughout her life, becoming autonomous again, and I hope this is one of those times.

She regularly walked from place to place for kilometers in her youth, not owning a car, and because she valued her independence dearly. Day and night, despite being afraid of the night because of ghosts and other magical beings, and in the daytime waking snakes and wild animals of which she is phobic. "Night" must be read as a different concept than in a city. In Italian Southern rural areas, electricity fully arrived only in the 1980s, and still, in the 2000s, sudden power cuts without warning were frequent.

My grandma kept a broom upside down outside the house's main door to avoid visits from "La Janara," a half-wolf creature attempting to enter the household and drag people away from their homes during a full moon. The thousand stiff fibers on the broom would keep La Janara busy counting until morning when the night creature would retreat. The description of this mythical figure changed from time to time, according to the women's gatherings I was part of as a child. At times, La Janara was described as a half-human, half-animal figure gendered as a man, and other times as a "lost" woman, a concubine of Satan, dragged by the Devil to a lustful life in search of other women to kidnap on behalf of "il Demonio," the Antichrist. The purpose of the abduction was never clear. It was not sexualized, even though nakedness was always part of depicting these imminent incoming figures. It was more to symbolize stripping oneself of earthly possessions and, consequently, any rights and obligations. Despite sounding incredibly liberating, as they had no inhumane daily tasks or jobs to accomplish, nor did they have to submit themselves to the prescriptions of marital life, judgment, or constant subjugation to laws, they had no way of fighting because of the disparity of means that was impossible to overcome—the means of production and its jurisdiction were not mastered or created by them, they were only the objects of those—peasants feared turning into such a life. Dreaming of a freed and emancipated life was sinful. Civil servants would also retell, analyze, and academicize these legends, rituals, and beliefs endlessly, openly ridiculing these events as forms of paganism and primitivism in forming a more "scientific" world. And yet, La Janara was no less tangible for me or these women. She was a body that could not be controlled. She betrayed any form of financial capital accumulation in so many ways. She liberated herself from material property and dependencies, family ties, nuclear family duties, and reproductive structures. My grandma told me she had heard La Janara several times during her youth. I was never sure if these stories were told to make me aware of the dangers of the night, but it worked because, during my teenage years, I would hear La Janara outside the door on full moon nights. She was not counting. She was digging. It created an idea of a heterotopia and a call: a form of escape, a life was possible outside of such an oppressive community. To leave, to liberate oneself, was a reality, though the consequences were grave.

The Fascist period was ever-present in these narrations. As a thin woman, my grandmother's weight was something that was labeled by the regime. She had to demonstrate her strength otherwise. She worked hard in the fields, making a living outside the house, and always loathed housework. I'm coming to understand her stubborn rebellion only after 41 years of knowing her, while I keep repeatedly hearing different variations of the same four or five stories. Her way of demonstrating she was

more potent than any biological man was to be silent, work incessantly, and command and challenge other people who would always remain behind her. As she was heavily respected, she managed to be strong-minded, embracing loneliness and moving away from traditional forms of affection. She stayed "illiterate" for the rest of her life, unable to read and write according to mainstream educational standards. She must have been among the first women supposedly choosing between the Republic and the Monarchy in a referendum on June 2, 1946. Monarchy, in theory, fell. Yet, it must not have meant much change in her life because she does not mention it. So, she continued to sign with an X on official documents. She often says she was utterly confused and had to return to her hometown from Naples during her youth because she didn't understand their language. Italian, the Northern "vulgar" tongue (*lingua volgare*) of Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarch, and Giovanni Boccaccio, turned into the dominant language with the formation of the Italian nation-state, replacing Latin in bureaucratic and educational institutions, and wiping out other languages in other regions, deemed as dialects. An easy way to acknowledge these proper languages as variants of the primary imposed language, a constructed and institutionalized lie. Roland Barthes would probably call it a mythology.

Today, as I think about my grandmother, I ask myself: Did my grandma ever care about art? Would her aesthetic life have been different if she had encountered or learned about the likes of Jackson Pollock, or Alberto Burri, who probably laid the groundwork for the great Arte Povera, the movement working with poor material? Carlo Carrà, Giorgio Morandi? Maybe Gina Pane, who addressed violence, domestic abuse, or anguished isolation?

I never made an effort to teach her art history.

My grandmother had always had icons and images. Yes, she did, and she does! But her idol is not Gina Pane, and probably not even the Virgin Mary, as the Virgin Mary is not a figure one can identify with (that would be sinful). Her house is full of saints everywhere, images, and small icons she hangs or carries around with her, as little figurines that open up to an afterlife. Transcendence. I have never asked her what expectations she really has for the afterlife since she believes in it, but I cannot be sure. I have not inherited the same beliefs, although she tried hard, and she secretly probably believes I do.

Her house is spartan, and her diet is strict. Her main room is filled with the overtly present Saint Pius of Pietrelcina TV channel; 24-hour broadcasting from the little town of San Giovanni Rotondo, where hordes of religious tourists fill the spaces, gripped by the mass inside, which spills out onto the street outside the church through loudspeakers.

As we inherit traumas, we inherit aspirations. My images probably came through television, too. A more Americanized version derived from a different revolution, the sexual liberation of the sort brought in through cheap TV predicates of the era of Berlusconi broadcasting channels breaking the existing rules of teletransmission from the dictates of national state TV rules. I wanted to become a fashion designer by 12, knowing little about what that meant and probably building on my mother's occupation as a seamstress. I have no idea how I came up with such statements, which stayed with me for years and were far from the silent submissiveness surrounding me.

I never realized how much impact my grandmother had on my willingness to not submit to my surroundings and rules that are supposed to subjugate subjectivity.

When speaking about aspirations, I could not pursue my dream, or only partially, because I still needed to encounter the counseling and guidance needed to move fast in such a world. That world was too far away to even understand the basics of how it worked, and mostly I would not have been allowed. The doorkeepers were not my parents but society and judgment. I didn't find any support from teachers, whose boycotting was partly due to self-defeat to a world that was ever distant from the normativities of a town life of unquestioned adherence to rules which seemed unobjectionable.

Curating has become that porous space with time demanding representation otherwise concealed. It still entails production and administration, allowing different voices to come in. Such a space enables others who do not belong to enter in several ways through persistence in the world of the arts. Flirting with private capital and public funding, the curator as a figure didn't change the dynamics of representation overnight but continues to be the doorkeeper of historical narratives and what's at the center, on the margins, and what's left out of these sacred spaces. Curating rests, as a meta-discipline, at the intersection of practicing and analyzing power structures. If we need to change systems and networks of representation, we also need to maintain curating "in power" to show the conditions of exhibiting *in* space. Claim responsibility by taking responsibility for where one speaks, who is speaking, and from which position.

To rethink funding, one needs to review the structures enabling exclusionary or monolithic functions within existing institutional behavior.

When we speak of speculating on funding, I cannot help but think of the fabulation my grandmother assigns to money and power. Even today, when she gifts me 20 euros a year, she attaches a value to it far from monetary, pretending she doesn't know the currency's accurate market value. In her economy, she has, for different reasons, never fully engaged with a strictly monetary system. But she attaches an emotional and symbolic value to the bill. Marx would have been fascinated to study the sociological impact of my grandmother's manipulation of money and its representational implications. She marks a pact between me and her of obedience. My grandmother knows I can't very refuse well the money, and I have to accept whatever emotional labor comes with it, no matter the sum. It is a play she has been playing since I was six, and she has never given up—though the younger I was, the less I got. On a different scale, I assume she does the same with every family member, creating the bases for a micro and a macroeconomy.

A real fabulation on money, aimed at changing structures within the art world, needs to rethink the system of empowerment within the arts, which cannot start or be limited to the exhibition space. When things and people have reached the exhibition space, they already belong to a specific knowledge space. It often ignores the many stories that have fostered the possibility of that space being there. We must change aesthetics and funding structures by rethinking the various institutions which enable people to come to the fore: primary and secondary schools, community centers, rural and remote centers, and the multiple places where different communities across different economic and cultural backgrounds meet. Such is an unavoidable task of institutions that are both publicly financed and have a public mandate to bring

forward and elevate several pieces of knowledge and histories that remain on the periphery of museums and art centers. Because at this moment, we have to ask, who's autonomous and for whom is this autonomy really?

***

When I was invited to speak under the rubric of Speculating on Funding*, I first focused on connecting money to the formation of the concept of shame in psychology via Sigmund Freud and eschatology, reflecting on the secret unconscious conditions of capital. Shame, like laughing, may make us come to consciousness of our condition, as much as it may prevent overcoming it. While the private sphere is still a primarily ignored category of what comes into funding structures, unconsciously marking who is visible and who is invisible in the exhibition space, I spoke curatorially about structural changes in positions of power we attempted to draw at Fotogalleriet in Oslo by continuously studying and changing the governance of the institution. Legitimization happens through perception and is representational. Therefore, it is a matter of a lack of "images," and thus, we can argue for why art and curating are central to the symbolic struggle for recognition. When writing and looking back at these thoughts, I wanted to point out something additional: people who are not part of financial art structures despite their use and perpetuation of images. I tried to understand other forms of agency tied to a different literacy, which is not based on written language but on other forms of intelligence, which still call and form autonomous subjects outside the cathedrals of the exhibition spaces. These individuals structured their* oikonomia*, household management, to preserve their dignity and integrity. It was essential to highlight these forms of resistance and image-making that too often escape the structure of production that most of us, as presumed equals in the art world, take for granted.*

By the time this text reaches publication, almost a year will have passed since I submitted the original manuscript to the editors. Meanwhile, my grandmother departed for what she called "the world of truth," which separates, according to her, the living from the dead, on January 29, 2023.

Antonio Cataldo is a curator and a theorist and, since August 2018, has served as the Artistic Director of Fotogalleriet in Oslo, a foundation primarily funded by the Ministry of Culture and Equality and the oldest Kunsthalle for photography in the Nordic region. Through exhibitions, discourse, and research for several internationally reputed organizations, Cataldo has championed institutional models rethinking their governing structures and how to reconsider traumagenic representation in the aesthetic field. Cataldo is an alumnus of philosopher Giorgio Agamben at Iuav, University of Venice, where he obtained his MA in 2006 and received his Ph.D. from the University of Reading, UK, and ZHdK, Zurich University of the Arts, in 2022. Cataldo chairs The Association of Norwegian Kunsthalles boards and sits on the Sandefjord Kunstforening Art Award jury.

Beyond the White Cube: An Interview with Renzo Martens

Shwetal Patel

In this interview, Shwetal Patel asks Renzo Martens whether decolonising the museum is enough, and how analysing the economics of non-profit art platforms can help us further understand the effects of globalisation upon the production, dissemination, and discourse around contemporary art.

Renzo Martens first began exploring politicised dichotomies in his early work Episode III: Enjoy Poverty (2008)[1], a documentary that suggests that the most lucrative export of Congo today is poverty. When Martens presented the film at Tate Modern, the number of Unilever logos around the gallery spaces struck him. Digging deeper into what and who has funded the western art world, he often questions whether just decolonising the museum is enough. Martens has taken ideas and theory to a point of realisation beyond discourse - and arguably beyond the current art world. Working closely with CATPC[2] and René Ngongo, this collaboration is a unique and innovative program of international accalaim that uses art to attract visibility, legitimacy, and capital to the plantation communities. The project aims to allow plantation workers to 'decolonise' themselves, creating an inclusive, ecological, and worker-owned Post-Plantation - inspired and (partly) financed by contemporary art. Described by Holland Cotter in the New York Times as 'politically problematic'[3], this reverse-gentrification project aims to restitute the capital, inspiration and people that were forcefully taken from plantations to fund the western (art)world for centuries. Documenting this process, Martens' more recent film White Cube[4] premiered in 2020 in Lusanga, Congo, challenging the concept of the white cube, and all the privileges that it stands for, using it as a symbol and catalyst for plantation workers to buy back their land.

Since this interview was conducted, Renzo Martens together with collective CATPC and curator Hicham Khalidi will provide the Dutch entry to the 2024 edition of the Venice Biennale.

Shwetal Patel: I want to start by asking you about your project, which I found very inspiring as someone who is practising both within Western Europe, and over the last twelve years in South Asia. How do you deal with working within two different systems, in terms of the politics and funding?

Renzo Martens: It is difficult to talk about funding––on the one hand, artists, in good or bad ways, disclose, or try to disclose, the mechanics of capital. And of course, at the same time capital is tied to the state, to war, to the climate crisis, to slavery, to racial capitalism and more. So one can treat the problems with capital as content; and make art about the large inequalities in this world. Yet on the other hand, the uneven distribution of capital is constitutive to the production of those artworks. Therefore, I've been trying for decades, and within the limitations I have, to disclose the terms and conditions of art production and overcome them.

The word 'hierarchy' is interesting to me. Etymologically, it points to the existence of sacred knowledge and a distinction between those who have access to this knowledge and those who do not. It seems that many of the most relevant exhibitions (whether they take place in the global South or Western Europe) deal on a content level with capitalism, the climate crises and so on. The exhibitions are often funded by Western European or North American entities, for example by government departments, arts councils, embassies, private foundations, museums etc. These exhibitions also often make claims about decolonisation, which is very welcome and long overdue. But sometimes I wonder who has access to those discourses? Whether one can go to those biennials and exhibitions - and be part of the discussions - which is ultimately policed by money. Most people that have grown up, or still live and work on the plantations that have historically funded Western art museums, can never go to those exhibition sites, simply because they would need a passport or a visa, or at least a ticket, and free time, or a certain set of clothes perhaps. If you make a hundred dollars a month, you won't be able to obtain a visa and chances are you won't have access to these discourses around decolonisation. To

put it simply: impoverished people on plantations do not readily have access to the art exhibitions that debate decolonisation. And so the question is: where is that sacred knowledge on decolonisation produced and who is allowed to access it?

SP: When we first met at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, you and I both had an affinity around the question of whom we are having these long overdue discussions around decolonisation and inequality for. Is this for our guilt and satisfaction or do these things have a wider socio-economic effect? Questioning these discussions around decolonisation may be quite unfashionable, but arguably they are not helping the people that we are talking about; or understand the terms of the discussion. What struck me when I was reading through your literature was that the presentation reads like an NGO, in terms of the statistics and concise arguments for why this is important. It clearly illustrates the divide between those that are being discussed and theorised and those that are doing the discussing and theorising. It makes complete sense on many levels and is very slick and convincing in presentation.
I wanted to ask you about the community in Congo. Specifically how you raised funds to buy back their land, to create the economic and creative freedom to be respected, not simply as farmers, but elevating them to some of the highest echelons of Western civilisation. It seems you are using money from the global north, alongside the apparatus of the art market to raise funds for these people, and I thought that this was quite a profound approach. What are the problematics of this strategy?

RM: I do think that these debates and discussions are long overdue, on inclusivity, the financing structure of the museum, and decolonisation, and I think they're not going nearly far enough. It was interesting that we met at the Stedelijk Museum, as over the last few years there has been a tremendous run of exhibitions that try to rebalance whose points of view are being exhibited in that museum. For the first time, there's serious attention to people who are not white males from Western Europe but also artists from the global south, and of course, women. Finally people of colour are being hired in senior management positions and they are doing tremendous work. I think, as an example, the show recently at Stedelijk, Kirchner and Nolde [5], was an interesting one, because it exhibited how two key artists from a century ago were deeply indebted to people in the global South. In particular one plantation in Papua New Guinea stood out where one of them went to study and create art.

I think that despite this exhibition, the Stedelijk is still too limited and there seems to be a lack of structural attempt to understand the material conditions of the museum. The museum has been built, brick by brick, with profits from plantations in the Dutch colonies, which would include Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Surinam and different regions in Africa that were connected economically to Amsterdam. The museum was not just paid with profits extracted from tobacco, cocoa, and coffee plantations, but also with profits from the speculation on future profits on these plantations. And so it is no coincidence that the Netherlands is still the biggest cocoa importer in the world. Just fifteen kilometres from the Stedelijk you can find millions upon millions of kilogrammes of cocoa, extracted from plantations. If we realise fully that indeed this great museum is in effect built with the profits extracted from plantations, and built with speculation on the never-ending and ongoing extraction of profits extracted from plantations, then it's not enough to now rebrand this museum as a site for inclusivity and diversity, simply by putting up thematic shows. It makes no sense to allow the Stedelijk Museum, which has benefited so much from colonialism, to now position itself as a centre of decolonisation, if the people still living and working on plantations that financed the Stedelijk are not yet in a position to also decolonise.

When you say that people on plantations 'may not even understand the terms of the discussion', I must disagree. It is not like people in the Global South or on plantations in Papua New Guinea wouldn't know all too well that they have already contributed enormously to the West.

SP: Sorry, Renzo…. I think you may have misunderstood what I was trying to say: that we in the West may not fully understand the terms of the debate.

RM: Thank you for clarifying that. Building on my misunderstanding, I would however agree that it may make little sense for some people to join in on discussions on how to decolonise the museum, if the benefits of those discussions remain restricted to, once again, the museum. Every day people are striking on plantations to get their land back, sometimes they are getting bullets in the head, it's not like they don't understand – I think they understand all too well.




Stills from *White Cube*, Renzo Martens. Copyright Human Activities, 2020.

The problem is the other way around. Do people who visit the museum understand their position vis-a-vis the struggles of the people on the plantations? The very same companies that built and financed these museums a hundred years ago still impose their policies today. Everything, the earth, people, plants, are completely instrumentalised for profit maximisation and the primary model that is imposed is monoculture. Again, the debates in museums around diversity risks remaining sterile, a toy for privileged people, if people on plantations cannot also part in these debates, influence them and benefit from them.

Of course, this is complicated, and I understand it can be taken as a contradiction in some ways to build a white cube museum on a plantation in Congo. But for me, it's about redistribution and repatriation: I think the white cube should be conducive to communities eventually getting their land back. My main goal is that the white cube can indeed become a site of reckoning and of taking responsibility exactly for its position, for its positionality. It can become an emblem of the apparatus that is now being turned against itself. It needs to refer to any other white cube, such as the Stedelijk Museum, or any other museum that has benefited from colonialism. I recognise that white cubes are first and foremost, all over the world, apparatuses of exclusion. Redistributing and positioning one of those white cubes at the disposition of the communities who have historically financed it, is I believe, a step forward.

SP: But why the choice of a white cube? Why not an art school, medical centre, or a children's playground? Was it built for OMA[6] to say that they were part of a cutting-edge project in the Congolese forest? Was it built with Dutch public money because it projected how the Dutch government was working constructively in zones of conflict?

RM: I think that in the film that we made about the project titled White Cube, it's quite clear that I started what I called at the time, a *reverse-gentrification* programme. Gradually it changed, and we built a white cube, situated in a very particular place, in Lusanga (*formerly Leverville*). Lusanga, and the other Congolese Unilever plantations, have directly funded the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Liverpool, the Leverhulme Trust - which gives grants to people studying the Humanities in the UK, and later the Unilever series at Tate Modern. So, I think the connection between this plantation and sev-

eral white cubes, or white cube type of institutions, is very direct and very clear. If plantations in Congo would have first and foremost funded playgrounds in the UK, then maybe an option would have been to build a playground, or if funds were used to build hospitals, then maybe a hospital should have been built. But in this case, it has directly funded museums. I think it is no secret that white cube museums, at large, are part of city branding, of attracting capital and visibility, next to functioning as symbolic and discursive spaces. I believe one of the many great things that ruangrupa (curators of documenta 15) did was to position another type of making art, and of thinking about art, that could be considered by some as 'off the radar', and bringing them to the 'centre'. I think that was a brilliant move and it is a move that has also been supported widely by funders. I think similarly, albeit on a much smaller scale, to build a white cube on this plantation is a way to acknowledge the positionality of museums vis-a-vis plantations and create the potential for new relations.

I think it's promising that museums decolonise; I think it's important for museums to ask for forgiveness and become redistributive mechanisms. They must acknowledge the attempts of communities on the plantations that have funded those museums to also decolonise. The white cube tries to be a lever or a switchboard to engender that change, because white cubes produce capital, legitimacy, and visibility; they do it in *Documenta* in Kassel, and they seemingly can also do it in Lusanga.

SP: From an administrative point of view, to maintain a museum, you need staff and visiting audiences that cares about what you're doing, or at least feels a part of it in some way. In this case, we're dealing with some of the most impoverished people anywhere on the planet, not to say that they don't deserve a white cube, but how much relevance does it have to their lives and for whom is it being done? Or is it more relevant to your life? In the sense of the cost of it, and if the funding was pulled away tomorrow, how would it maintain itself?

RM: I think these questions go for any museum or exhibition, what happens if the Stedelijk loses its funding tomorrow - will it still exist? You know that's a big question mark. I think in this case, it will still exist because what this museum produces is not just a museum programme, like a series of exhibitions, discourses, or publications, but what it produces is the means of production that come back within the hands of the community.

SP: Without support would the jungle simply grow over the museum? Do you think the audience or the Dutch government see as much value in it as you see?

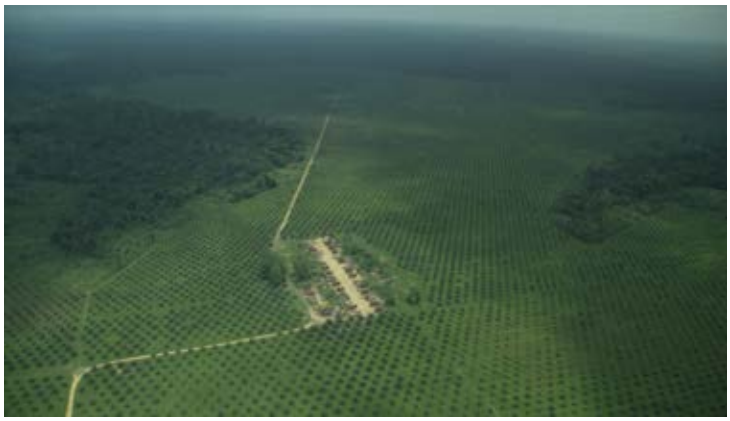
RM: I think part of the answer is very similar to the answer that any institution would have to give, what happens with the Stedelijk Museum or Documenta if funding stops tomorrow? Will they still have a programme?

SP: That's a very good point. I just wonder in this case that if the funding runs out one day, does it become a burden to the community?

RM: Museums need funding to run their programmes and so that's no different in Lusanga. But I think the most important thing that this particular white cube produces, or what I hope it produces, is not merely a museum programme, but it is the one white cube that intends to ask for forgiveness and bring back the land in the hands of the community.

In that way, the white cube is simply an apparatus that returns agency,land and capital to the people from whom it was taken away. So, I hope it goes on for a very, very long time and not just in this place, but in many other places. I think at some point there will need to be so much pressure on Unilever and other companies, that they will not only actively resituate the land that they confiscated but also pay for the repair for what they've destroyed, including rejuvenating the forest. So the white cube is just simply a catalyst for that to happen. At this point, even if it were to stop tomorrow as an exhibition space, hundreds of hectares of land have been brought back and restored into these ecological safe havens that the people now live in.

SP: In the post-structural economic paradigm there were lots of NGOs buying land back for indigenous communities so that they could fund their own farms and escape subsistence living. I'm interested in how you are using art in very different ways; working with René Ngongo and presenting shows in New York that have received huge critical acclaim. You also support Congolese artists to sell their work through galleries. Would it simply have been enough to use those funds to help them buy back the land and create studio facilities and then help them to produce more art? Again, I question this insertion of a white cube in the middle of a jungle – who is the audience?



Still from White Cube, Renzo Martens. Copyright Human Activities, 2020.

CATPC members (from left): Olele Mulela Mabamba, Irène Kanga, Huguette Kilembi, Jérémie Mabiala, Jean Kawata, Mbuku Kimpala, Ced'art Tamasala and Matthieu Kasiama.

RM: I think that the white cube is not a white cube in the jungle, I'm afraid I've been misquoted at some point, because the white cube is not at all in the jungle, it is on a former Unilever plantation. And the logic is quite clear: these plantations have financed white cubes elsewhere, so the first act of restitution is to simply give back what has been involuntarily financed by the community. Certainly, hospitals, schools and other infrastructure have also been extracted from these plantations, but white cubes are among the most prominent spaces and they are the ones in which the discourse of 'decolonisation' is formulated, and of course, people on plantations can and should be part of that. Even this discussion that you and I are now having, it's in a magazine called *OnCurating*. It's not a white cube literally, but a type of white cube, with its own conditions, history, and limitations, and it's based in Zurich. Therefore, the way forward can't simply be reorganising what is happening in white cubes in Zurich or making them more inclusive or more diverse. Acknowledging their positionality and repositioning them to the very spaces where the capital, inspiration and energies were taken away to build white cubes in places like Zurich and Amsterdam – It is simply an act of creating a level playing field.

When you ask why you didn't instead create studio facilities or just buy back the land, as you say, things like this have been attempted since the eighties, including by René Ngongo. He ran the NGO OCEAN, one of the only organisations that through ten years of the most brutal war, was able to preserve primary forests for the people living in them. Therefore, it's not a coincidence that he later founded Greenpeace in Congo. René Ngongo has been involved in the deepest way possible.

Now, do people want and need it? I suggest that you get in touch with CATPC because I'm not the best person to speak on behalf of CATPC or anybody else. But from my perspective, it seems that people are using the white cube as leverage to get back the land and to make the white cube pay. Beautiful sculptures have been made, and are being made, and are being exhibited in Lusanga, elsewhere in Congo, on the African continent and internationally. Thousands of people have come and seen CATPC's work, sometimes in the white cube but more often outside of the white cube. The white cube is just a signal that this is a place that stands in relation to the capital that was taken away and the forests that were destroyed. So what to do now? Some people in CATPC call it a monument or a coffin, for all the lives that were stolen, through plantation labour and also the transatlantic slave trade.

SP: I'm very grateful for your patience because these questions do not come from a place of cynicism or scepticism; they are coming from a space of curiosity and admiration. In terms of this concern that somehow these discourses don't go far enough, I have never come across somebody, certainly not an artist, who has taken ideas and theory to this point of realisation. Which leads to my final questions; How could we scale this in different contexts, and therefore, what are the lessons here for the rest of us who can't go to these lengths? And finally, what's next for you?

RM: Thank you for your compliments but I think that I have none of the answers. These are global problems and I'm limited in what I see and what I don't see. The one thing I did try to do was acknowledge intuition, it has been built on intuitions of members from CATPC and René Ngongo. Especially the first time we discussed the very idea of *reverse-gentrification*, to make sure that these debates and discourses were not only taking place

Self Portrait Without Clothes, Mbuku Kimpala / CATPC, SculptureCenter, still from *White Cube*, Renzo Martens. Copyright Human Activities, 2020.

in Zurich, Cape Town, Dakar, or even Kinshasa, or Lubumbashi, but also with the people that have been pushed down, far below the working class, on the plantations. So René insisted that the thing people needed and fought for was land. One of the reasons he left Greenpeace was because he felt Greenpeace at that point was working almost exclusively for a global arena with relatively little direct impact for people on the ground. He wanted to reconnect the discussions that are happening globally, on a political level about inclusivity, climate change and land rights, to the people who are living on the ground. In this case - on Unilever plantations - working for nine dollars a month. And we really bonded from the start in questioning these realities.

But what can we do? We talked a lot about this in Lusanga. First and foremost museums should become sites for redistribution and restitution. I don't only mean restitution of objects, because the main thing that has been taken away is not those objects, but the societies in which those objects function. Just as seriously as we take the agenda of the decolonisation of museums, the communities on the plantations that funded these museums should also be in a position to decolonise themselves.

As a simple example, I think the Stedelijk Museum should (in addition to the recent exhibition of *Kirchner and Nolde's*, displaying how these artists benefited from colonialism and appropriated motifs from plantations in Papua New Guinea) spend their entire acquisition budget on art from the very communities that financed the museum. I recognise the Stedelijk Museum self-identifies as an art museum, not a museum on social justice. That is not a problem. The people on the plantations that have funded the Stedelijk Museum, and have inspired Kirchner and Nolde, also make art. They not only co-authored Kirchner and Nolde's work, but helped build the entire museum. Whether the curators of the Stedelijk Museum appreciate their art or not, is irrelevant. I think that whatever people on the plantation say is their art should be paid for.

So I don't think that museums, like the Stedelijk, should reserve a part of their acquisition and exhibition budgets for people of colour. I think that they should reserve their entire budget for the communities that live and work on the plantations that have financed the museum. If not, there's a real risk that museums that benefited from colonialism are now going to be the first beneficiaries of decolonisation.

Notes

1 Episode III – Enjoy Poverty is a 90-minute film by Renzo Martens in Congo. He states, "Images of poverty are the Congo's most lucrative export, generating more revenue than traditional exports like gold, diamonds, or cocoa. Martens started an emancipation programme in which he encourages local communities to monetise their poverty." Accessed Feb 3, 2023, https://www.humanactivities.org/en/product/episode-iii-enjoy-poverty/

2 "The Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) was founded near Lusanga in the south of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in August 2014, by a group of plantation workers from three plantations in the south, in collaboration with ecologist Rene Ngongo and the artists Michel Ekeba, Eléonore Hellio, and Mega Mingiedi. The organization is a grassroots platform for the development of new economic initiatives based on the production and sale of critical art. Through the launch of a creative economy, it aims to improve the economic position of its members and their communities." Accessed Feb 3, 2023, https://www.humanactivities.org/en/catpc/

3 Holland Cotter, "African art in a game of catch up", New York Times, March 13, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/13/arts/design/review-african-art-in-a-game-of-catch-up.html

4 "White Cube" accessed Feb 3, 2023, https://renzomartens.com/whitecube/

5 "Kirchner and Nolde: Expressionism. Colonialism." Accessed Feb 3, 2023, https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/kirchner-en-nolde-expressionisme-kolonialisme-2

6 OMA - Office for metropolitan architecture - designed the white cube on the plantation in DR Congo, opening

with an exhibition by Ghanian artist Ibrahim Mahama. Accessed Feb 3, 2023, https://www.oma.com/news/white-cube-lircaei-designed-by-oma-david-gianotten-featured-in-idfa-2020-documentary

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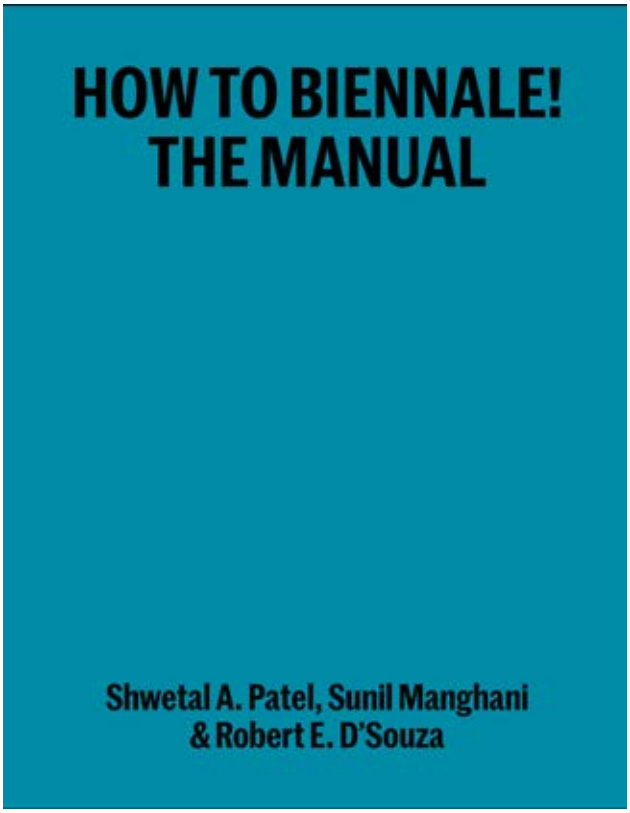
Renzo Martens (1973) studied political science and art. After making the films Episode I and Episode III: Enjoy Poverty, Martens established Human Activities and its "reverse gentrification program" on a plantation in the DR Congo. Together with the plantation workers of the Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC), he employs artistic critique to build a new world – not symbolically, but in material terms. Together, they opened a White Cube that is meant to repatriate capital and visibility to communities of plantation workers. White Cube, Martens' latest film, shows how Congolese plantation workers set a new precedent: they successfully co-opt the concept of the 'white cube' to liberate their land and turn it into forests. CATPC, Renzo Martens, and curator Hicham Khalidi will provide the Dutch entry for the Venice Biennale 2024.

Shwetal Ashvin Patel is a writer and researcher practising at the intersection of visual art, exhibition-making and development studies. He works internationally– primarily in Europe and South Asia– and is a founding member of Kochi-Muziris Biennale in India, responsible for international partnerships and programmes. He holds a practice-based PhD from Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, where his thesis was titled 'Biennale Practices: Making and Sustaining Visual Art Platforms'. He is a guest lecturer at Zürich University of the Arts, Royal College of Art, and Exeter University, besides being an editorial board member at OnCurating.org and a trustee at Milton Keynes Museum and Coventry Biennale.

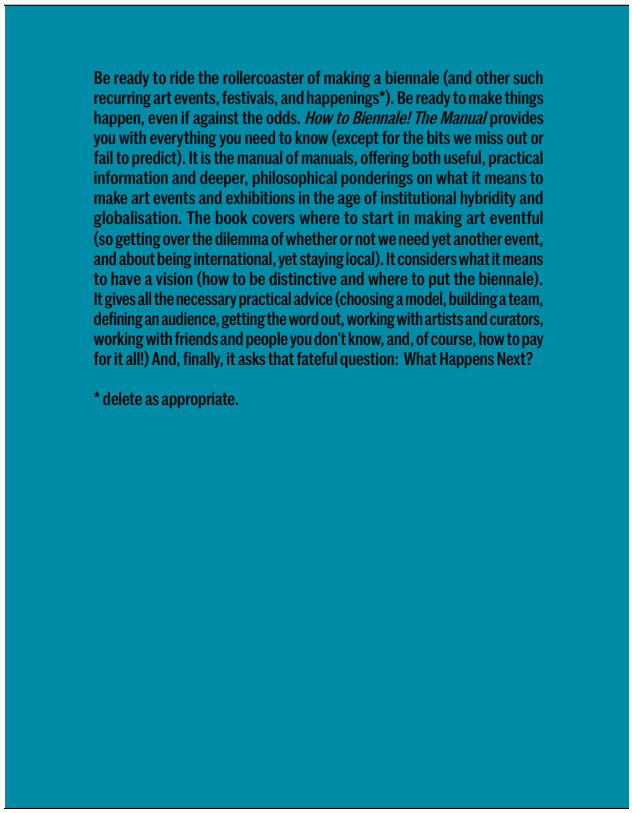
"How to Biennale! The Manual" (2018)
Shwetal A. Patel

In 2017, I began developing a set of critical tools based on my doctoral research at the Winchester School of Art (University of Southampton), and in particular their weeklong residency at the Tate Exchange[1] (Tate Modern) in 2018.

The impetus for the research stemmed from the fact that, to date, very few practical and user-friendly guides to making and sustaining non-profit arts platforms exist in the field, both in academic and popular literature. Although several high-quality publications, websites, and journals exist in the academic and policy domain, very little is accessible to non-specialist readers. The aim was therefore to fill this perceived lacuna in the literature around biennials and other types of large-scale exhibition platforms.



Front cover



Back cover

'How to Build an Art Biennale' at Tate Exchange (2018)
As part of the Tate Exchange programme, Winchester School of Art occupied an entire gallery for a week of participatory events and workshops, including *How to Build an Art Biennale*. In conceptualising one of the days of the residency, lead curator Dr. Sunil Manghani, the then head of the school, Dr. Robert E. D'Souza, and I began discussing the creation of an easily accessible guide (or manual) to "making and sustaining art events" like biennials, in the 21st century.

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Postscript

rising inequality, art, conflicts, and issues that matter in our worlds. But at the same time we also need to stress the relevance of Biennale in a wider social-cultural and political context'.

POSTSCRIPT

A couple of people have read through what we have written to check on the spelling and to see if we should be sticking in any more punctuation. They were disappointed with the way we ended it. We don't know what they expected, or what you expected. We certainly did not know what we expected. Maybe an attempt at metaphysical wit. "Expect nothing, accept everything", something like that.

— The KLF, *The Manual* (1988).

and/or…

Clutch at straws. Build castles on clay. Let the quicksand tell you lies. Take the scenic route. Be there on time. Use two drummers if need be. Fill out forms. Seconds. Minutes. Hours. Days. Midweeks and predictions. Fall, spin, turn and dive. Sign cheques. Solicitor doing deals with "Hits" and "Now". Sleep at night. Black to white. Highest new entry. Good to bad. Fast forward. Top of the Pops. Re-read this book, whatever it takes. No, don't. You already know all there is to know. Faster. Faster. Faster. Give everything. Just give everything. This is the beautiful end.

— The KLF, *The Manual*, (1988).

Taking a cue from 1980s artist collective and pop band KLF's *The Manual (How to Have a Number One the Easy Way)* (1988), we developed the concept for *How to Biennale! (The Manual)*. Conceived as a research and knowledge exchange opportunity, the primary aim of the manual was to crystallise the field into a helpful and accessible "guide" for both professional and novices.

Overall, the manual proposes that, whether you have been engaged in real-life art projects, biennials, and other such initiatives— even imaginary ones— the underlying need and urgency to biennial (as a verb) is born out of a desire and passion to engender deeper political and cultural needs that can make a difference to society.

As a part of this research framework, WSA faculty and I organised a one-day conference at Tate Exchange that included a series of workshops examining key aspects of the publication. Invited experts and researchers convened to discuss, dissect, and contribute to the draft publication, with the intention that the editors would use these inputs and suggestions in the final publication. The title and focus of the workshop reflected

Tate Exchange's theme of "production", and WSA drew inspiration from the Kochi-Muziris Biennale and its "productionist," "artist-led" values and ethos. Staff and students from WSA were invited "to explore the production of art within social conditions examining what underlies the art biennial format, the framing of contemporary art, its labour, and viewership."

The overall programme sought to work collaboratively across the key areas of the School's BA Fine Art course—sculpture, painting, printmaking, and new media—as well as external participants, Tate Exchange staff, and audiences. Limited draft editions of the manual were given to all participants, who were also encouraged to develop and contribute their own additions to the final version of the book. The day provided an introduction to "How to Biennale! The Manual" with a series of informal discussion groups, facilitated by practitioners with key experience, across a range of issues from thinking through vision and distinctiveness, to building a team and connecting with artists and audiences.

The programme was broken into three distinct sections addressing the core organisational, conceptual, and practical elements of making and sustaining an art platform or cultural event today. Fifty participants were split into groups with experts within their field of interest who led the freeform discussions. Participants were then asked to contribute findings and suggestions to the draft based on their insights, processes, approaches, and experiences in the field.

In that sense, the publication is a crowd-sourced compendium of case studies, theories, processes, methodologies, governance protocols, and evaluative frameworks. Crucially, the specific "practice" that emerges from and underpins perennial art events and exhibitions are mostly site-specific and unique. And, no doubt, readers may devise their own manual accordingly!

You can download PDF versions of *How to Biennale! (The Manual) 2018* and *'How to Build an Art Biennale' at Tate Exchange (2018)* via the website: www.on-curating.org/issue-58-reader/introduction-to-how-to-biennale-the-manual

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Notes

1 Founded in 2016, Tate Exchange was the first of its kind in an art museum anywhere in the world. Conceived as an open experiment, which grew and changed over the course of five years. The programme encouraged the spirit of collaboration, community partnership and experimentation.

Shwetal Ashvin Patel is a writer and researcher practising at the intersection of visual art, exhibition-making and development studies. He works internationally– primarily in Europe and South Asia– and is a founding member of Kochi-Muziris Biennale in India, responsible for international partnerships and programmes. He holds a practice-based PhD from Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, where his thesis was titled 'Biennale Practices: Making and Sustaining Visual Art Platforms'. He is a guest lecturer at Zürich University of the Arts, Royal College of Art, and Exeter University, besides being an editorial board member at OnCurating.org and a trustee at Milton Keynes Museum and Coventry Biennale.

#biennale or A is for Artyzol 671,793 posts
by Kuba Szreder

Responding to the invitation of the "on curating" editorial team to delve into a bottomless pit of the 671.000 Instagram posts tagged with #biennale, at first I started to look at images. Unfortunately IG feeds tend to be too self-reflectively curated. So I saw carefully selected images of art objects, made as if nobody else was taking other photos in exactly same time. As if biennales were about art. I was slightly disappointed. It did not resemble biennales I know – messy affairs attended by throngs of art aficionados - where art talk is at everybody's lips. At the biennales I know, who met whom is just as important as who saw what. And then I turned to reels, which indeed are much more real. They provide us with a much better (and moving) image of people intermingling, cuing, small-talking, meeting, partying, making photos, submerging in the crowds, slacking and being watched while watching art. The art lingo mixed with social media exclamations, hyperboles and adverbs. The automatic "speech to text" bots give this a slightly subversive veneer, as they automatically record international art vernacular, neatly subtitled, a proper peek into the subconsciousness of artistic circulation. Reels are all the buzz.

I have tried to capture the very same murmur of the relentless grind of global art circulation in my recent book "The ABC of the Projectariat. Living and working in a precarious art world". In this comprehensive lexicon I try to map intermittent existence of people who make one project after another and many in the same time. One of the first of its sixty seven entries is dedicated to Artyzol, a mysterious substance that makes art people board budget flights and flock to yet another opening of the whatever biennale they want to attend, and post one of those 671.000 #biennale IG posts. Below an abbreviated version of the entry:

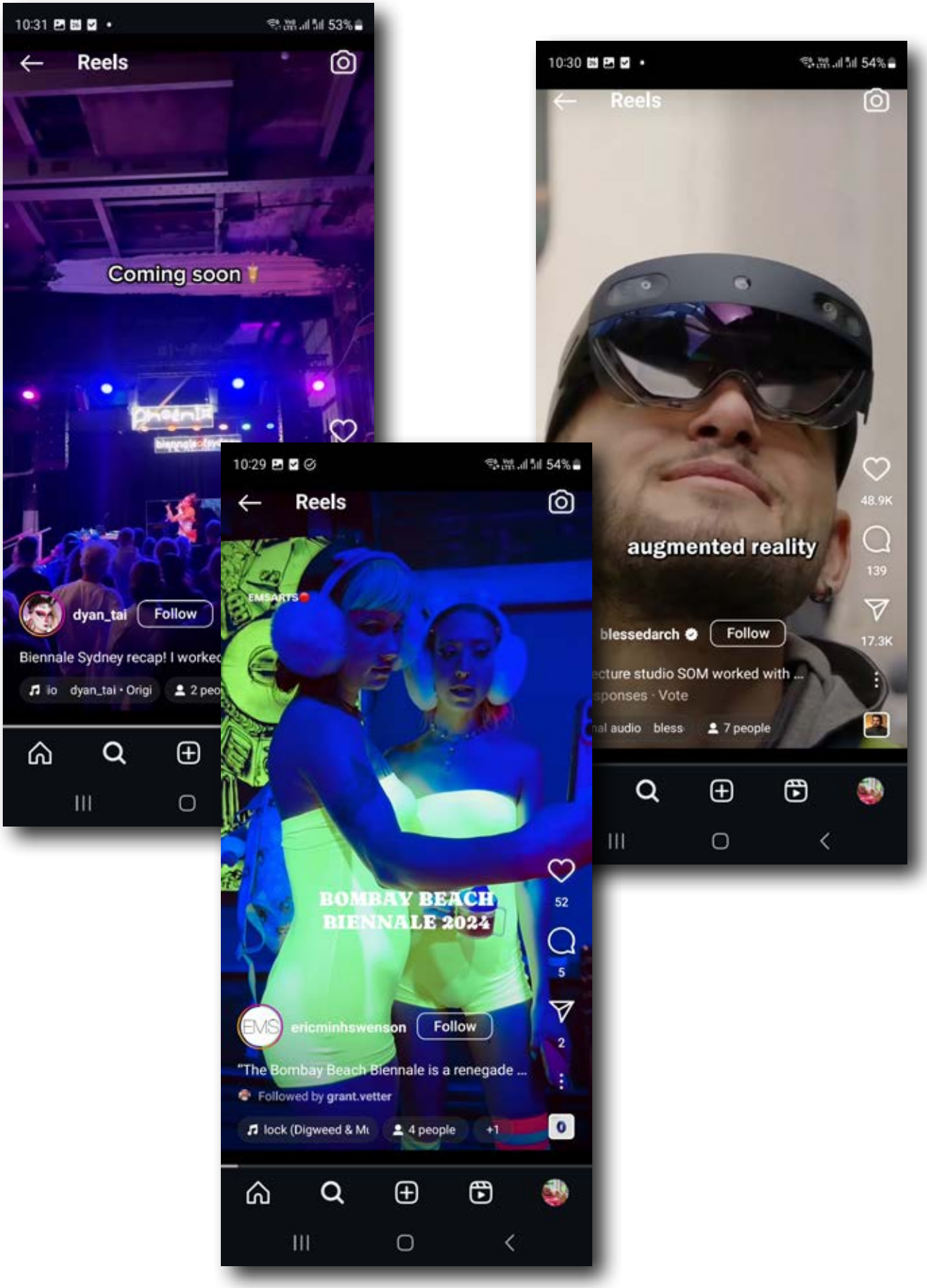
A is for Artyzol

'Artyzol' is a Polish neologism, invented by the Free/Slow University of Warsaw to describe the affectionate relationship between art workers and art work. We generated this term to denaturalise the same love of art that the art world mythologises. Artyzol is a linguistic hybrid of 'art' (in Polish, part of the word artysta , i.e. artist) and 'Muchozol', a bug spray produced during the good, old, communist times. This etymology is pretty fitting, as Artyzol might be fairly intoxicating in overdoses. But in small quantities, Artyzol is somewhat stimulating, as it is sprayed to infuse the atmosphere – of events or institutions – with artistic allure. Artyzol in its gaseous form is characterised with an elusive and yet pervasive scent, with smoky undertones, hovering over larger art events like the smell of vegan sausages grilled at a hipsters' barbecue. (...) But on a more serious note, thinking about Artyzol was not only a flight of theoretical fancy, but rather a tongue-in-cheek way of dealing with a pretty serious problem, because the artistic projectariat most of the time runs on fumes, unpaid or underpaid for their art work, crammed into small apartments in zone four of metropolitan centres, flocking to major shows and biennales via budget airlines (when they actually take off, which is far less certain than it used to be before the age of COVID-19). Even if Artyzol is a theoretical hypothesis, the artis-

tic projectariat makes actual sacrifices to pursue their love for art. Artyzol is the opiate of creativity, which emerges in the process of artistic circulation.

(...) It has to be noted that when the notion of Artyzol was officially introduced (...) it prompted a mixed response. Some fellow art workers welcomed this as a tongue-in-cheek take on their daily struggles. After all, who has not felt intoxicated in the rush of running from one project to another, or become slightly tipsy from making art? On the other, Artyzol has been taken at face value – as if it was an academic term that reifi es complex social relations as some sort of material substance. The lovers of art hated it just as much, rightly identifying it as a poke at artistic autonomy, with all its romantic underpinnings and fi xations. At the end of the day, it is a humorous metaphor coined to denote a serious issue. But it is not a spray. Nobody sane would start running around the Giardini in Venice to test the air for mysterious perfumes enticing unconditional love of art, unless it would be framed as a re-enactment of one of Robert Barry' s conceptual art pieces, made for the very fun of doing it. However, a high concentration of Artyzol would explain why all those people run around Venice as if they were a flock of headless chickens – and suffer withdrawal symptoms when their biennales are suspended."

Kuba Szreder is a researcher, curator, and a lecturer at the Academy of Fine Art in Warsaw. He cooperates with artistic unions, consortia of postartistic practitioners, clusters of art-researchers, art collectives and artistic institutions in Poland, UK, and other European countries. He is editor and author of several catalogues, books, readers, book chapters, articles and manifestos, in which he scrutinizes the social, economic, and theoretical aspects of the expanded field of art. Current research interests include curating interdisciplinary projects, artistic research, new models of artistic institutions, artistic self-organization, postartistic theory and practice. In 2021 his book The ABC of the projectariat: living and working in a precarious art world was published by the Manchester University Press and the Whitworth.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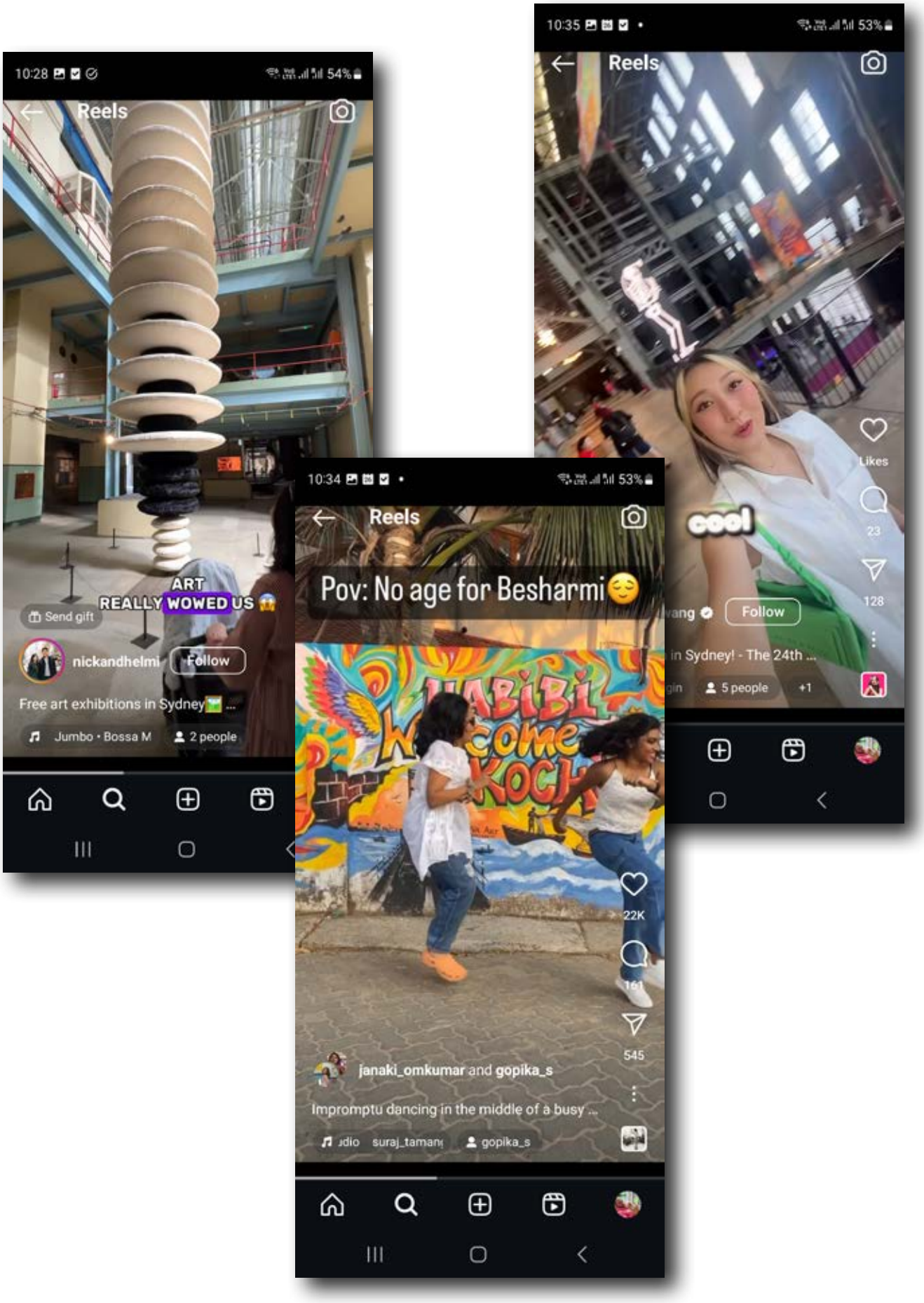
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