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The Artist is Absent: the Artist as Creativity Entrepreneur and Changes in Representation and Practices of “Art”

ABSTRACT

Currently, a small team based at the university of St Gallen is undertaking ethnographic field research centred around the subject “Artist entrepreneurs and art fabricators: practices and representations of fine art in the context of manufacturing”. Based on qualitative research such as participatory observation in art manufactures, comprehending interviews with all participants, but also documentation of entire production processes, the study aims to explore this specific configuration of art production and its effects on changes in the perception and legitimisation of art.

While conceptual innovation – the idea on which the artwork is based – continues to be the exclusive domain of the artist, material and technical innovation as part of the realisation of an artwork is increasingly outsourced from the artist’s studio to art workshops run by invisible art service providers. More and more, there is a growing distance and expanding chain of events between the concept and its material implementation. These new relations of production around artistic goods raise fundamental questions about the understanding and the status of art, but also about pricing on the art market, where such hidden costs certainly have an impact on the high value of works such as those by Hirst or Koons.

From the point of view of a specific anti-economical ethos, embodied in the motto “l’art pour l’art”, artists and capitalist market societies do not form natural alliances. “The market and the economic processes within it” do not recognise the ‘characteristics of the person’: it is governed by ‘material’ interests. It knows nothing about ‘honour’.¹ In

1 Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972), 538.

the field of art, however, the "characteristics of the person" and its singularity are of the greatest consequence. The anonymity and impersonality of purely professional relationships are frowned upon, at least based on the ideal of a social exchange worthy of and corresponding to the medium of art. Addressing and expressing the economical truth of the art business violates a social taboo.

Consequently, the artist is a stranger and outsider in capitalist market activities from the outset. At the same time, ever since his or her emancipation from secular and clerical authorities and a rejection of the latter's patronage, the artist is entirely dependent on market mechanisms as a material basis for his livelihood. This is reflected in a profoundly ambivalent relationship with the market, characterised by a collectively shared resentment against those forms of art which are considered too overtly commercial and marketable. They appear corrupt and facile, and are subject to blanket accusations of betraying art's innermost principles. From the start, the field of modern art thus originates from the specific societal dynamics of its creation and ideology and is split in two spheres. The "antagonistic coexistence of two modes of production and circulation which adhere two opposing types of logic"² as described by Bourdieu was to have a profound and more or less radically expressed effect on the development of art and on the ethics and the self-relation of its protagonists. However, in view of the following description and analysis of current transformations of artistic practice, which are characterised by typically "capitalist" forms and conditions of production and a nonchalant acceptance of market logic, such a view based on art sociology now seems to become gradually obsolete.

More than any other area of the social world, the field of contemporary art is marked by the dynamics of permanent radical change. When the assumption of irreducible singularity and originality is both programmatic and a precondition for the acceptance of legitimacy in art, a process of constant revolution is in place – not only with view to the aesthetic forms of expression in artistic practice but also with regard to the actual forms and practices of production.

Increasingly, the material shaping of artworks is delegated to assistants or outsourced to workshops.³ This is reminiscent of the practices of prestigious Renaissance artists. In a split between "head" and "hand", or "concept" and "implementation", a new understanding of the artist as an entrepreneur of creativity emerges.⁴

Currently, a small team based at the university of St Gallen⁵ is undertaking ethnographic field research centred around the subject "Artist entrepreneurs and art fabricators:

2 Pierre Bourdieu, *Die Regeln der Kunst. Genese und Struktur des literarischen Feldes* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999), 228.

3 Arnold Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur* (Zürich: Ex Libris, 1978), 331ff.

4 Kirsten Forkert, *Artistic Lives* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 11.

5 In addition to the author, the team consists of Patricia Holder, Nina Fahr and Thomas Mazzurana. Enquiries are focused on the concrete interactions between artist and producer in conceiving and creating the

practices and representations of fine art in the context of manufacturing". Based on qualitative research such as participatory observation in art manufactures, comprehending interviews with all participants, but also documentation of entire production processes, the study aims to explore this specific configuration of art production and its effects on changes in the perception and legitimisation of art.

While conceptual innovation – the idea on which the artwork is based – continues to be the exclusive domain of the artist, material and technical innovation as part of the realisation of an artwork is increasingly outsourced from the artist's studio to art workshops run by invisible art service providers. More and more, there is a growing distance and expanding chain of events between the concept and its material implementation. This phenomenon also has a bearing on pricing and has been mostly neglected by academic research. Typically, artists like Hirst or Koons, whose works are among the most expensive in the world, do not mention the share of production cost – or the share in the artwork as such – which is the result of the many hands that are "at work".⁶ To uphold credence in a singular artistic process of creation, an artist such as Ai Weiwei needs to emphasise that he was entirely in control of the production of each and every one of the 100 million sunflower seeds needed for his artwork. Meanwhile, Jeff Koons declares that he managed to eradicate the creative subjectivity of his helpers, who are mostly artists themselves, to the extent that they only execute his instructions.⁷ So what remains of the idea of an artwork born laboriously in the solitude of an artist studio, and how close have we come to the model of an art entrepreneur managing a large team?⁸

Well-known predecessors and models of such forms of art production like Tinguely added their personal finishing "touches" to the practical implementation of their ideas and devoted direct and considerable physical effort to the complex and exhausting production process. Today's followers in their footsteps usually "set to work" (or not) by adopting forms of entrepreneurial planning, such as the recruitment of suitably trained

final product, the considerations about the material practicability of the idea, the negotiations of financial and scheduling conditions, the work share and the degree of freedom involved in the implementation, the calculation of the final price and the regulation of property rights etc. The fieldwork was based on participatory observation and qualitative interview and started as a pilot study using the example of the St Gallen art foundry. Currently, thanks to funding by the Swiss National Fund, an extension to further relevant production sites for artworks is underway.

- 6 Damian Hirst diverged from this standard procedure in the Venetian exhibition, where he stated the production costs for the roughly 150 works as 50 million pounds. The art collector François Pinault contributed millions to the display. Each piece was created in an edition of three. The head of the Medusa is available at US\$4m, smaller objects even for US\$500,000. (<https://www.cicero.de/kultur/damien-hirst-in-venedig-urlaub-fuers-gehirn>; <https://www.monopol-magazin.de/treasures-from-the-wreck-of-the-unbelievable-damien-hirst-netflix>).
- 7 Alvaro Santana Acuña, Where Does the Value of Art Begin? (Part One), in *Books and Ideas*, 2 May 2016. URL: <http://www.booksandideas.net/Where-Does-the-Value-of-Art-Begin-Part-One.html>.
- 8 Pierre-Michel Menger, Artistic Labor Markets – Contingent Work, Excess Supply and Occupational Risk Management, in Victor A. Ginsburgh / David Throsby (eds.), *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*. (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 2006), 765–811.

specialists for their studios, or the outsourcing of production processes to art workshops. On the basis of an artist's concept, the execution frequently takes place in a workshop at a distance – perhaps with his or her selective presence, let alone involvement. With regard to status and functionalities, today's production formats differ significantly from their historic predecessors in Renaissance artist workshops.⁹ Apart from the circumstances rendering the traditional relationship between master and pupil obsolete, the service providers must acquire their respective expertise elsewhere, and their mostly absent patron will not be on site to look over their shoulder and intervene if required. A major difference lies in the societal representation and legitimisation of art. The changes in artistic ethos which began with the Impressionist revolution in the nineteenth century in the name of "l'art pour l'art" (Bourdieu) turns the aspiration of absolute uniqueness of creator and art object into a crucial principle of legitimisation for modern art. At the same time, the centre of the aura and symbolic power of art was not the master of a Renaissance workshop, but rather the religious or mythical subject matter and the quality of execution of the artwork. A master would also typically be directly involved in the production of works. It was only capitalism and the consumer world's characteristic mania for commodities and their associated "brands" that laid the societal and cultural foundations for a veneration and heroisation of the artist figure. This has an almost religious flavour and at the same time established a monopoly claim on authorship.

The social phenomenon of the artist entrepreneur is in some respects reminiscent of Honoré de Balzac's characterisation of the artist. In 1830, Balzac's *Treatise on Elegant Living*¹⁰ not only provided a catalogue of the etiquette and rules of social distinction for elites of the Nouveau Régime of the bourgeois age, but also delivered a programmatic definition and legitimisation for the status of the artist in between these elites, located as a hybrid life form between the leisure of the aristocracy and the active toil of the working population:

"The artist is an exception: his idleness is work, and his work, repose; he is elegant and slovenly in turn; he dons as he pleases, the plowman's overalls, and determines the tails worn by the man in fashion; he is not subject to laws: he imposes them. ... He is always the expression of a great thought and he towers over society."¹¹

It is worth noting that Balzac excludes the sculptor in his boiler suit from this paean to the ideal of artistic creation, since using a hammer and chisel requires getting one's hands dirty, in a type of work which appears as an archetypal example of hard graft. From this perspective, in delegating these "lesser" duties today's art entrepreneurs are simply acting in a logical manner.

9 Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte*, 331ff.

10 Honoré de Balzac, *Treatise on Elegant Living*, tr. Napoleon Jeffries (Cambridge, Mass.: Wakefield Press, 2010).

11 Balzac, *Treatise on Elegant Living*, 9.

Capitalism's New Spirit in the field and attire of "Art"

These new relations of production around artistic goods raise fundamental questions about the understanding and the status of art, but also about pricing on the art market, where such hidden costs certainly have an impact on the high value of works such as those by Hirst or Koons.

For an overwhelming impression of the new ostentatious gigantism and campaign of materiel that was dubbed "winner's art"¹², there can hardly be a better stage setting than Hirst's Venetian exhibition "Treasures from the wreck of the unbelievable" at the Palazzo Grassi.¹³ This type of art entrepreneurship prominently displays the marriage of art and capital, as well as the characteristic big player alliances in this sub-field of the art world. One may be tempted to speak of a *ménage à trois* for the Palazzo Grassi show, since it is a joint venture by three key figures of the art market in complementary roles. Hirst delivers the product brand in person, the French entrepreneur François Pinault and owner of the private museum at Palazzo Grassi, as well as of the financial holding Groupe Artémis, provided the venue and a significant part of the substantial budget, and Larry Gagosian, owner of a global art gallery business, supplied the operations and distribution channels. No mention is made of the hundreds of service providers required for making the megalomaniac multi-media show happen. All companies and other parties were subject to strict non-disclosure agreements with threats of severe legal consequences. Conversations with insiders of the Venice Biennale, which "happened" to take place at the same time, repeatedly mentioned how highly efficiently the business model had been strategically planned and realised by the triumvirate Hirst-Pinault-Gagosian – a *liaison particulièrement dangereuse*. Even prior to the exhibition, many of the large-scale sculptures presented in this setting, one might argue of sometimes dubious taste, had already been sold in multiple editions to affluent art collectors, thus minimising the business risk.

Apart from the question who can and wishes to afford the purchase of such objects, questions relating to their purpose and form of societal use are highly relevant in the context of our research. It seems clear that such artworks were not created to decorate a private home, as extensive as it may be. In art world jargon, "art fair art" is often juxtaposed with "biennale art".¹⁴ Indeed, the type of art we are exploring in the present project came into being during biennales, which offered both the requisite space for bulky art objects and a greater openness towards experimental and avant-garde forms of expression. As such, they represented a less commercialised sphere of art production and circulation. Over the last decades, the art market sub-section phenomenon that is our subject experienced a boom. It should be mentioned in passing that biennales, which used to adhere to a self-representation removed at arm's length from the market, if not even ostentatiously

12 Wolfgang Ullrich, *Siegerkunst. Neuer Adel, teure Lust* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2016).

13 Exhibition dates: 4 September 2016 - 12 March 2017.

14 The term art fair art was coined by Jack Bankowsky, Tent Community: On Art Fair Art, in *Artforum*, vol. 44, no. 2, October 2005, 228-232.

anti-economical in concept, have recently become increasingly relevant platforms for dealing in manufactured art objects. Public visibility and recognition for such artworks are also significantly enhanced through global fairs such as Art Basel, where this type of object is presented in its own exhibition hall, in parallel to the actual "market hall" for art. A grand stage setting is thus ensured while a wide public is familiarised with the concept.

Private Museums as Settings

A crucial societal and economical condition for this new sub-section of the art market and its underlying production processes and conditions is most likely supplied by private museums, which have been growing at a surprising pace over the last two decades. More and more private collectors indulge in the luxury of displaying large-scale art in rooms which can easily compete with public contemporary art museums in terms of size, equipment and collection display. Our interviews with American collectors such as the Rubels or Scholls made clear how much is invested in this form of large-scale art. A dozen further private art museums in Miami's Design District provide rich illustrative material for the boom in new collecting practices in recent years. Many collectors take their own initiative and commission works from artists of their choice, with large-scale installations sometimes tailor-made for the intended rooms. Some of our interviewees in the area saw the existence of Art Basel as a central factor for the hype of this art form, as observed in Miami over the last decade. Locally, the fair's appeal not only established the aforementioned private museums of main collectors, but also a growing number of global galleries whose owners can offer joint-venture concepts of such large-scale projects, together with the artists they represent and their client collectors.

This also brings to mind the role Charles Saatchi played in Hirst's first attempts at commissioned works in the seven-digit price bracket. Even then, a large part of the production was outsourced to busy third party hands. In his own way, Saatchi is a prime example for the blurring of boundaries between traditionally separate role patterns and functions in the field of art, opening a "public museum" in London to display his own collection, from which objects appeared on the art market soon after, anointed with the respectability of this institution and with the corresponding increase in value. His strategic placement of the artists in his collection in sensational national and international exhibitions also allowed them to ride a self-induced wave of popularity, followed by sales of their works in his own gallery at previously unheard-of prices.

Comparable to the Saatchi-Hirst tandem relationship is Koons's connection with Gagosian, with whom he shares an art and business approach. Together, they bring Koons's gigantic and costly large-scale sculptures to market. These sculptures demonstrate the particular appeal of such "overwhelming" objects. Assisted by an army of highly specialised craftsmen, huge objects are created which are flawless in material and execution. Analogous to media theory, one might say that "the material is the message". The perfectionist aesthetics, which can often appear sterile, are achieved through an enormous effort by the numerous technical experts, driven by the artist. The labour time invested of-

ten reaches the limits of economic feasibility. Many interviews with art service providers conducted by our research group confirm that their work ethos and the pride they take in the work are major motivators in a practice geared towards technical perfection. Similar to employees of a start-up under the auspices of neo-liberal zeitgeist, self-exploitation practices in this area are driven by a high level of identification with and a wish to serve the "cause", from which the art entrepreneur not only derives material benefit but also artistic prestige, forming the basis for his personal brand.

However, it is ultimately not revealed which part the material and employment costs play in the pricing of works that sell for millions. The employment of assistants, creative workshops, technicians, service providers in logistics etc. and their effect on art market pricing remains shrouded in secrecy.¹⁵

A Global Industry

Academic analysis of the art market also gave scant attention to the business development process of service providers who generate orders and offer innovative packages on this fast-growing market, thus becoming a factor in artistic innovation themselves. For example, subsidiary markets are created through third party services purchased by the service providers themselves, who are in turn employed by the artist, gallerist or collector. This is based on simple economical considerations. As a matter of course, art manufactures rely on the know-how of specialised industrial companies to whom they outsource individual steps in the production process. This can save costs and production time – be it through forms of mechanical industrial production procedures or by saving the expense of specialised machinery –, allowing for several projects to be handled in parallel.

Furthermore, globalisation in the field of art production has a direct and massive effect. It is not only mass-produced goods such as textiles which are outsourced to China, but also and especially the production of labour-intensive large-scale art. For several years, this market has been prospering. Due to the local low wage levels, but also the traditional expertise in metalworking production processes, European art manufactures are increasingly able to resource ideal conditions for cost-effective externalisation of work stages, even taking into account shipping costs. According to our interviewees from this sub-section of today's art production, the resulting division of labour forms are comparable to those in other areas of the globalised capitalist economy.

The "brand", as the symbolic capital of the artistic good which is created remains Western, the hard graft is done by cheap labour in China. The finishing touches are then completed by the primary contractor or service providers of the art entrepreneurs. Art employees could hence be described as art entrepreneurs in their own right.

15 See for example Beckert, Jens / Rössel, Jörg, Kunst und Preise. Reputation als Mechanismus der Reduktion von Ungewissheit am Kunstmarkt, in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, Vol. 56, 2004, 32-50.

The highly competitive activity on this market for the production of art wares leads to a situation where art entrepreneurs or their financing partners – gallerists, collectors or sometimes public institutions – put jobs out to tender with relevant companies to place cost-conscious orders. Such marketisation and the economical primacy make the traditional pattern of a relationship between artist and workshop assistant obsolete. The decades of close cooperation between Auguste Rodin and his assistant Paul Cruet, which were the theme of an exhibition on the occasion of the 100-year-anniversary of the sculptor's death, "Auguste Rodin et son mouleur Paul Cruet" at the Musée Français de la Carte à Jouer in 2017, appear like a romantically embroidered image of the fusion between head and hand in creating art when compared to today's market relationship between artist and service provider. In conversation, the head of a large German art foundry explained that in his view, the anonymity of service providers in art is also explained by the market-driven frequent changes in commissioning companies. While Rodin's foundry of the three Rudier brothers and the name Cruet were part of the Rodin "brand", such long-term relationships are largely non-existent today.

From the Manufacture to a Stage for Art

The dizzying speed of innovation and metamorphosis which we observe in our subsection of the art world are not restricted to the above-mentioned economical aspects. Our ethnographic field research to date has demonstrated that art manufactures also become active players in the field of art by virtue of their sole existence. As they emerge from the shadows, they can become a focus for many institutions, actors and practices. For some time, they have represented an attractive terrain for art world insiders as a subject for debate, most likely due to their rising importance as production sites and the relevance of the clients they serve.

Art manufactures respond to their growing visibility and attractiveness by expanding their product and activity offerings. We were able to observe innovation in the form of exhibition spaces associated with production sites, be it in Switzerland or in Germany, where works produced on site are displayed. A large sculpture foundry recently began to build and let artist studios next to lavishly equipped exhibition halls, while also running an on-site restaurant and letting spaces to designers. One might describe this as a process of blurring the boundaries between previously separate spheres and practices. It certainly aligns with an event-driven use of art in society based on the creation of walk-in zones of experience. Analogies can be identified in venues such as a major Paris gallery, which offers facilities similar to those of a public museum, including exhibition spaces, a bookshop and a café for "lingering". This trend could already be observed in the United States several years ago, where for example a production site in a place like Walla Walla in Washington state has become the focus of a range of attractions, comprising galleries, artist studios and diverse cultural offerings.

In spite of such innovation, the emerging new production conditions for art wares remain surprisingly invisible to art historical research, even though they raise fundamental questions about the understanding and the status of art. While essays about the di-

agnosis of the present (Zeitdiagnose) in the art world pointed out these transformations, there are no empirically founded art sociological studies. For example, the curator Martina Weinhart stated that "the contemporary art world is now closer to the work-sharing film industry than to the romanticized idea of the lonely studio of the brilliantly inspired artist".¹⁶ As underlined by Ullrich, artists are now becoming employers and "must motivate others, delegate many tasks or be supported by subcontractors and craftsmen in the production. They lead negotiations with project partners, supervise installations and provide customer support."¹⁷ This interpretation reactivates the pre-modernist ideal of the artist, which measures an artist's rank by his ability in "disegno" and his development of new ideas, as outlined by Ullrich. This brings to mind another type of "disegno" practice, that is the field of Haute Couture, where a similar division of "head and hand" emerged in producing high-priced consumer goods during the course of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ In this example, the Grand Couturier delivers his design to his "industrious hands", a small army of seamstresses, and typically appears only for the finishing touches on the model garment, which he then transforms with his personal "griffe", bestowing the symbolic capital of his signature, the extraordinary quality as well as the exceptional price which will be asked for it. While at the beginning of his career Andreas Gursky developed his photographs himself, he employed many invisible helpers for monumental series such as *Pyongyang*, becoming a "brand" himself, as Velthuis pointed out.¹⁹

How can we explain the broadly notable collective embellishment of what are in fact highly collaborative processes in this type of art production? How can the continuation of a romanticised image of the lonely genius and creator of a singular object be explained in a counterfactual manner, when the collective character of the object's production is all too evident? What induces all participating actors to collude in the required misjudgement and denial and to contribute to a silent game of "as if"?

For the artist, the answer seems obvious. His role as creator whose name and signature gives sole authorisation to an artwork, bestowing the aura of art on the object in an act of transubstantiation, makes him an immediately and primarily interested party in maintaining the collective illusion. Other actors involved in the marketing either as buyers or sellers, be it gallerists or collectors, or members of associated professions in the temples of art, would hardly have a particular interest in revealing the – really obvious – secret. But what about those who work in the back offices of art production and in the artist's

16 Martina Weinhart, *The Making of ... Art*, in Martina Weinhart / Max Hollein, eds., *The Making of Art* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König 2009), 32; Daghild Bartels, *Abschied von der Ich-AG?*, in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 11 June 2002.

17 Ullrich 2016, 99.

18 Pierre Bourdieu / Yvette Delsaut, *Le couturier et sa griffe. Contribution à une théorie de la magie*, in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 1975, 7-36.

19 Alvaro Santana Acuña, *The End of the Traditional Art Gallery? (Part Two)*, in *Books and Ideas*, 9 May 2016 (<http://www.booksandideas.net/The-End-of-the-Traditional-Art-Gallery-Part-Two.html>, accessed on 24 April 2018); Olav Velthuis, *Talking Prices. Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 77ff.

shadow? Let us turn to these mostly silent actors and try to describe the conditions from their point of view, as related to us during in-depth interviews.²⁰

"We make art for artists"

During our interviews with art producers, we asked for example how they described the character of their work and their role to outsiders. A carpenter who had studied art history without completing a degree explained:

"Usually, people find it hard to imagine: 'But the artists, don't they do it themselves?' This is somehow always the standard question, where you say, yes, no, this is somehow rather big and ... (laughs). One person alone could not manage it. And today, it's simply like that, the amount outsourced is mega, yes, we are a company making art for artists (laughs). If you want."

We then asked: "But is this a topic people bring up, do they ask 'oh, you worked at this art object, well, is your name on it then?'" He said no, that never came up, and continued:

"People are somehow really resigned then. They are flabbergasted. What, the artist, he does not do anything. They somehow still struggle with conceptual work. Or, that it is in some way about an idea and later, the execution can be done by anybody, to put it unkindly. No, I believe that you define what art is and what is the job of the artist. And yes, art is in some way a mirror of society. And it is a super reflection, for example that there are some kind of subsidiaries in China, in a way that reflects our system too, how it works. So from that perspective, it is really...".

We ask: "And does it not bother you that art reproduces this too, like the head earns more than those who execute. Isn't it like another separation of craft and idea?" The response was:

"Yes, but in this case I see it like, so, when something goes wrong here, then it is in a larger context, and then it is simply a mirror of that. It is somehow logical, it is mega stupid when an artwork is later sold for three million and we created it, like, for 200,000. Then you do feel kind of stupid, but it is somehow a given. I mean, it's like that everywhere."

In this description of the role of a company which "makes art for artists", as one of the interviewees said, our interlocutor presented an image of a very particular segment of the art world, seen from different perspectives. He initially emphasised that according to his experience, the work on an art object was largely ignored by the public, and if perceived at all, then in a baffled way, running counter to the popular idea of an artist and his work.

20 These are only a few exemplary extracts from the transcripts of several dozen comprehending interviews (verstehende Interviews) lasting approximately one hour.

We asked a metalworker in an art foundry: "And when you see the artwork, is it made clear that you contributed to the creation of value there?" Answer:

"No. Normally it isn't. Not at first glance. So, the... The information is usually somewhere, kind of an art foundry mark is usually on every artwork, but not visible, at the bottom. So if you want to look at it, you can see which foundry made it, but it is not visible at first glance."

When we asked again: "This is probably intentional, isn't it? That it is done in this way?", the response was: "Yes... Well... Yes. I don't know, it is probably more the artist's signature like on a painting actually, that one can see that. The producer is directly concealed."

This perspective on the largely invisible material producer of the artwork uses the comparison with an artist signature on a painting as justification. This may be logical at first sight, but is less convincing when we consider that a painting was typically made by the hand of the artist, whereas such an involvement in the artwork in question could not be further from reality. The term used by the craftsman for the producer as being "directly concealed" is of interest, as it resonates with the non-explicit rules of art which define an artwork's singularity by the signature of a unique subject. These rules need to be preserved even in a counterfactual way in order to maintain the transformation of a material object made by others with calculable material and production costs into a symbolic good of inestimable value. When we asked: "Does it bother you? When you invest so much graft and time?", the answer was:

"No, I think it is actually still ok that one has ... a silent share, in a project. Of course, if one maybe wants to have a few extra pieces of background information about a particular artwork for research, if you do research, it would sometimes be helpful to know, who made it. This is something of a pity, I think it's ok when it is not marked on the artwork, but I would find it really useful if one could just somehow in the documentation or somewhere, could find out who made it... It is so often, you google and you can search as much as you want, you just don't find out who made it."

Why is there this secrecy? Is it not worth mentioning the producer's contribution to success, to the finished artwork and its quality? A motto repeatedly quoted by the actors of the art world is "The winner takes it all!", and in this instance we are faced with a radical variant of it. The author in the singular appropriates the artwork through adding his final signature to a work that was largely created by others, using others' expertise and craftsmanship. His name adds a brand to an object which he or she may have first seen at an exhibition opening, and the mark of his or her signature transforms it into a symbolic good. As stated above, according to Bourdieu this is akin to transsubstantiation in a religious ritual, an act of magic which is solely possible and effective through the collective belief in the legitimacy of the performance of enchantment.

But what about the role of the artist as such, bearing in mind the above-mentioned metamorphoses of his role and ethos? The artist entrepreneur seems to have finally dispensed

with any awkwardness characterising the relationship between art and commerce since the emergence of "modern" art. As a "self-entrepreneur" he markets his name and the symbolic capital accumulated in it, which is comprised of reputation, that is public visibility and attention. Is this perhaps the vanguard of a future art world, defined by dynamics of marketisation and commodification of art, in contrast to its previous aura which relied precisely on the ostentatious opposition to the world of commodities? There are many other indications of a blurring of boundaries between the seemingly incompatible if not antagonistic worlds. Art students today receive academic training in knowledge and competence of market analysis and strategies. They learn techniques of self-marketing, including the ability to write their own eulogies for exhibition openings. And is the market value of an artist not increasingly a seal of approval, last, not least defined by ubiquitous ranking? In a dystopian vision of the future, the ultimate interpenetration of art and capitalist market structures are not inconceivable. Yet neither is the end of art in the shape and practice as we have known it since the nineteenth century.

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