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Transactional Arts

Art as the Exchange of Values and Conversion of Capital

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PART III: CASES OF TRANSACTIONAL ARTS

In this section we will introduce various cases of transactional arts. We will start with the historic example of Duchamp and then move on to contemporary art with a special focus on arts making use of new media. We differentiate between personal transactions and individuals and institutional transactions, where organizations are involved. In a third group we subsume artworks, where transactional systems, e.g. market-platforms are the subject. Transactional systems are on a different level as they *facilitate* transactions of various parties.

We will analyze the works with the general theoretical concepts we have in the previous chapter, especially the various understandings of the concept of value and the various forms of capital. For the section of institutional transactions I rely on microeconomic approaches to businesses, and basically the various disciplines to run organizations, such as corporate finance, strategic management and the various processes, such as production, distribution, marketing etc. Of course one could have tried to present the artistic examples grouped according to the kind of conversion of capital or according to the most relevant notion of value. However, I found this approach not feasible, as in many works various aspects of our analytical instruments occur and also the co-existence and overlapping of the different interpretations create the complexity of the art. However, it could be subject to further research.

Together with the theoretical apparatus from economics, the gathering, analysis and classification of these examples were highly inspirational for our own artistic work on transactional art. For the future, there could be a “dialectical” cross-fertilization between the theoretical framework of transactional art, the examples and classification we introduce and

artistic practice and vice versa – leading potentially to the refinement and evolution of both domains.

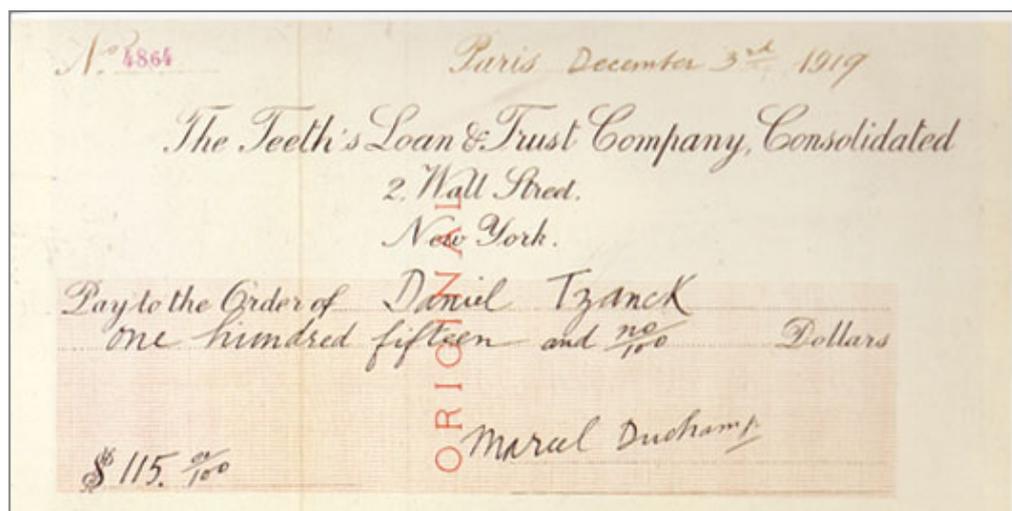
Induction: What are the general characteristics of transactional arts. Goodman..is it a inductive approach..i just find it more plausible to sum up the main characteristics at the end, rather than introducing them upfront. For establishing the category of transactional art.

What makes these transactional artworks art? As we will see, many of the works actually

Paradigmatic Example: Duchamp - An Early Transactionalist

Marcel Duchamp may be considered as an early “transactionalist”. Reflecting value and a fascination for financials was a trait of Duchamp, which accompanied him throughout his production.

In 1919 Duchamp paid his dentist, Daniel Tzanck, a passionate art collector, with a hand drawn enlarged facsimile cheque as compensation for services rendered and as a piece of art at the same time. In 1965 interesting enough, two other cheques followed *Cheques Bruno* 1965 and the *Czech Check* to different recipients. The Tzanck Cheque was drawing to an account at "*The Teeth's Loan & Trust Company Consolidated of New York*" for the amount of 115 dollars, it is also clearly fraudulent. According to the records, Duchamp later bought it back from his dentist for a price greater than its nominal value, which is not surprising, since Duchamp was probably aware of the additional forms of capital which the works had accumulated, such as its cultural value as a collector’s object.



Marcel Duchamp, Tzanck Check, Original Version 1919

In 1924 Duchamp issued 30 “Monte Carlo Bonds” over 500 Francs each , and apparently raised funds from his friends in order to play Roulette at the Monte Carlo Casino promising 20% p.a. interest redeemable in three years. However, his gambling strategy did not beat the odds, but he didn’t lose either and paid only once 10% interest, one year later.



2. Marcel Duchamp, Monte Carlo Bond (No. 12) 1924

According to written records, Duchamp did never pay back the principle and, if the numbers are correct, made a profit of 13.500 Francs (initially 15.000 raised, paid back $30 \times 50 = 1.500$). In purely financial terms, or economic capital, the purchase of the bond for the investors may appear as a loss, but considering the deal as the acquisition of an original Duchamp artifact (that even earned a 10 % return) – cultural capital - it may be construed as a great buy. As with his ready-mades, the accomplished artist Marcel Duchamp creates value by an act of declaration - here in the form of an amicable deal (a contract represented by an artistically designed and signed bond certificate) with his audience, i.e. collectors.

Let’s analyze the two examples with our notions of value: The artifacts have obviously some sort of value of labor – producing the artifacts, which are hand drawn and Duchamp’s actually complains about amount of effort it took him to meticulously copy the details of the cheque.

In the case of the cheque there is a clear exchange value, which is in Economic Capital the value of the treatment. In the case of the bond, it is the value of the promised capital (time-value of money). Obviously there is some sort of additional value, and Marx would argue – a

case of commodity fetishism – since the artefacts have some attribute, which extend their mere use value. This additional value may be called symbolic value in the sense of Baudrillard – some sort of value, which embeds the art-pieces into the world of other artworks and the system of inter-relationships of references in the postmodern sense. Of course, there was some sort of sign-value as well, showing the arte-facts in relation to other individuals. The symbolic value emerges in relation to other artworks, which have not the prestige of being a “original Duchamp.”

The notion of originality of course is another complexity has been discussed in the literature excessively. We will here only keep it in mind, that the cheque is a hand drawing, the bond was a print, therefore had an element of reproducibility in it. The fact that Duchamp is mimicking originals, which are meant to be not copied since they are financial documents, is another aspect of his provocative and humorous esprit.

Symbolic Exchange? – What else is this whole art work, than a demonstration of a symbolic exchange overcoming use and other understandings of value. Duchamp himself liberates himself from the use value of his art by exactly defining it by himself as having a use value and an exchange value.

Let’s not forget Jevons’s marginal utility: this notion is also here applicable, though offers a bit a remote track of thought: would someone like to be *only* be paid in Duchamp artifacts? No, a dentist would probably not want to be only paid by “Duchamps”, but perhaps after some insight and considering the massive appreciation, they may would. Same for investors: investing only in Duchamp’s may violate common and widely spread heuristics for portfolio management like risk –diversification – but why not – bet all the fortune on a Duchamp. So there may not be a diminishing marginal utility in this case.

However, we find actually Bourdieu’s approach much more elegant, since it unifies somehow all other ideas about value: Duchamp transforms cultural capital into economic capital, the collectors need to be connected to an (informal) network around Duchamp and they gain not only the cultural capital, of true Duchamp artifacts, but also the symbolic capital coming along with it. All these are factors of the ex-change value in terms of economic capital on the art-market, if they should decide to divest the art pieces.

In the Chapter on “Art and Economics” of her book “Unpacking Duchamp”¹ Dalia Judovic asks explicitly “Is it business or is it art?” and quotes Duchamp: “Money was always over my head.” She explicitly draws the connection between Duchamp’s playful “commercial activities” and the notions of value.

“There is one detail in Marcel Duchamp's lengthy artistic career that troubles both his sympathizers and critics alike: the fact that he bought and sold paintings, those of others, as well as his own. Pierre Cabanne questions Duchamp's forays into commercial activity, since they blatantly contradict his own expectations of Duchamp's artistic attitude and supposed "detachment" from material concerns.² Cabanne is not alone in asking these questions. When asked about why Duchamp allowed an expensive edition of ready-mades to be done by Arturo Schwarz, John Cage echoes Cabanne's sense of contradiction:

"Why did you permit that, because it looks like business rather than art" and so forth. Marcel admitted that it could be so interpreted, but it did not disturb him. He was extremely interested in money. At the same time, he never really used his art to make money. And yet he lived in a period when artists were making enormous amounts of money. He couldn't understand how they did it. I think he thought of himself as a poor businessman. These late activities were like business.

Still, Cage has problems with the late editions of the ready-mades, which, unlike the "original" editions, he now considers to be like "business." While Cage recognizes Duchamp's caution and discipline in not “extending the notion of the Ready-mades to everything,” as well as his original difficulty of coming to the decision to make them, he also feels that later in life, Duchamp abandons this caution and "would sign anything that anyone asked him to." Thus, while Cage is able to recognize the limited edition aspect of the ready-mades, he is unable to deal with Schwarz's reissuing them as a "second edition." Whereas Cage is willing to assume Duchamp's initial signature as the signature of the artist, he is uncertain whether the second signature is not merely that of the businessman.

¹ Judovitz, Dalia. *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft3w1005ft/>

A “signature as a businessman” would indicate a speculative conversion of the cultural capital into economic capital.

The effort to extricate art from economics proves to be extremely difficult, since Duchamp's oeuvre stages significant questions regarding the effects that the ready-mades, as reproducible objects, will have on the relation between art and economics, as well as the definition of the artist as author and guarantor of artifacts.

This section refers to the relationship between the production-value of artworks in general and the special case of the production value, which seems close to zero value adding by the artist for ready-mades.

Cages and Cabanne’s difficulty in reconciling art and business reflects the fundamental prejudice in the Western conception of the artist, which supposes art to be entirely removed from the economic sphere. There is however something fundamental shared by art and economics: the notion of value. It can be argued that value in art is an abstraction, since masterpieces are so valuable that they are often priceless. Yet the same is true of the value generated by commercial transactions, insofar worth is relative to the system of exchange that generates it. What fascinates Duchamp is the process by which a work acquires artistic and commercial value. The production of value entails, for him, a social and speculative dimension. In his Interview with Cabanne Duchamp describes his earliest venture into commercial activity “sometime before 1934”.

We try to elaborate Judovic’s interpretation with our instruments and rely in your analysis on the conversion of capital. The following table refers to the in the Duchamp pieces of the Tchantcheque (TC) and Monte Carlo Bond (MCB).²:

	Economic Capital (EC)	Cultural Capital (CC)	Social Capital (SoC)	Symbolic Capital (SyC)
Economic Capital	EC-> EC	EC-> CC	(additional to Bourdieu):	EC-> SyC

² “Additional to Bourdieu” refers to conversion, which Bourdieu did not explicitly mention in his essay.

	Theoretical Accrued return of investment for the bond holder.(MCB)	Besides his formal artistic education , Duchamp comes from a culturally very sophisticated family	EC->SoC For the bond holders: access to an informal network of Duchamp collectors.	Acquisition of the symbolic value of a real Duchamp arte fact.
Cultural Capital	CC-> EC Duchamp's art work raises financial capital (MCB). Has the exchange value to pay for a dentist treatment. (TC) <i>Embodied CC:</i> as Duchamp himself <i>Objectified CC:</i> Bond and Cheque required material for their production n.	CC-> CC Appreciation of the cultural capital of the artefacts in cultural terms-	Additional to Bourdieu: SoC-> CC Only friends of Duchamp were able to get the Bond/Cheque, if one wasn't somehow in the network, one would not have gotten it in the first place.	SyC-> CC Not applicable?
Social Capital	SoC -> EC Being in the circles around Duchamp allows to have access of the artefacts as CC which can be converted into EC.on the art market.	CC-> SoC Expertise about art etc. which may qualify to be part of the Duchampian circles.	SC-> SC Social Capital and Renomee may rise (more a function of the increase of the EC associated with the Duchamp artefacts)	SoC -> SyC Potentially display of the Duchamp artefacts as status symbols
Symbolic Capital	SyC-> EC Symbolic Capital as one additional aspect of EC. If subject to a fraud, then the alleged SyC of a real Duchamp is subject to the conversion to EC	SyC-> CC Non Art-lovers may become through the exposure to the SyC of the artpieces true art- lovers, embodying CC	Additional to Bourdieu SyC ->SoC Access to exclusive circles – “nouvelle riche”	SyC -> SyC Accrued symbolic capital (more symbolic capital is easily converted into more symbolic capital)

Forms of Capital and their Conversions into each other.

Duchamp himself provocatively converts his cultural capital into economic capital –violating the somehow the unspoken taboo, that artists should not enrich themselves *as part of their art*.

Duchamp's deal, is actually crafted along a variety of interpretations of the notion of value: that of Duchamp's conceptual and artistic work in creating the bond, the value of an "original" Duchamp art piece for a collector and on the art-market, the aesthetic value of the pleasures of being inspired (open also to non-possessors) and the price or face value (in economic capital) for which the bond is sold. The complexity of this transactional art object is derived from the interplay of the various forms of capital. Interaction becomes transaction manifested as a financial instrument, issued and authorized by a self-empowered artist who actually benefited financially. Self empowered, since the privilege of issuing of financial instruments is normally reserved for organizations within a highly regulated domain in an economy.

As mentioned earlier, artworks with a transactional component tend to challenge a fundamental western aesthetic conception demanding art to be entirely separate from the economic sphere. Thus was Duchamp repeatedly accused of lacking detachment from material concerns, though he appeared to be mainly interested in the speculative and provocative aspects of his works. As the mastermind of the art of the 20th century and beyond, Duchamp seems to have anticipated also the core mechanisms of transactional art.

Individual Transactions

The first category is individual transactions, meaning we will focus on transactions between individuals. This individual is often the artist, sometimes also his audience. The mentioned artworks all have a rather intuitive and non-theoretical approach and do not refer to the discourse of economic exchange and the professional field in the business-practices, such as financial planning in retail banking.

Asymmetric Exchanges, Give Aways and the Denial of Profits

Often artists act in opposition to economic principles e.g. the artists generate some values but give them away or deny taking the profit. This is in many cases a deliberate choice in opposition to economic principles and a critique of capitalism. The idea to discard profits may be motivated by the principles of 18th century aesthetics as discussed.

Especially when a transaction happens between artist and audience, artists seem to waste potential gains thereby apparently contradicting the central premise of modern economics

assuming a “rational agent” pursuing maximal profit. The notion of the rational agent though has been heavily criticized within the economic disciplines in the meantime, such as in behavioral economics and behavioral finance³.

Art as a give-away may interpreted in the context of George Bataille’s theory of consumption⁴, where he states in the introduction that “that the extension of economic growth itself requires the overturning of economic principles—the overturning of the ethics that grounds them.”The “accursed share is an excessive and non-recuperable part of any economy which is destined to one of two modes of economic and social expenditure: it must either be spent luxuriously and knowingly without gain in the arts, in non-procreative sexuality, in spectacles and sumptuous monuments, or it is obviously destined to an outrageous and catastrophic outpouring in war.”

In these kinds of artworks one may argue, is economic capital spent often in creation of social capital. Artists create events, online or offline, where the audience has an opportunity to learn about each other, become a community and/or interact in other ways together.

A famous historic example of non-profitable transaction in economic terms (and therefore art as give- away) is Yves Klein’s work “Void” from 1958. Klein managed to sell void space in Paris for gold, which he afterwards threw into the river Seine⁵. As if selling void is an illegitimate activity, the profit has to be wasted afterwards “in order to restore the "natural order" that he had unbalanced by selling the empty space.

³ E.g. Dan Ariely investigating the irrationality of choices in: Predictably Irrational, Harper Collins New York, 2008.

⁴ Georges Bataille, *La Part maudite*, 1946 and 1949, translated, *The Accursed Share*, 1991

⁵ Stahl, J. Kunst als Giveaway, <http://www.uni-bonn.de/~uph60016/texte/givestahl.htm>



Yves Klein, Void, around 1958

Klein makes the audience exchange economic values (gold) for an aesthetic value (the concept), but then, treats this concept as a “nothing” or void. Though he does not reimburse the audience (perhaps because after all they received a compensation, the aesthetic value) he does “return” the raised funds to a non-entity, which is basically the public space, where they diminish. Economic value is exchanged for aesthetic value, then the gain is reflected in somehow economic terms and the artist does not feel entitled to keep the profit. This may be considered as a statement about the aesthetic value he thinks he has delivered, or a way to avoid an obligation within this “deal”.

There are many artworks, where the artist is actually giving for free an entity of value to the audience. According to Johannes Stahl⁶, Plinius, the younger, refers to the painter Zeuxis, who was so convinced about the quality of his art that he considered any price for it as too low and therefore he would have to give away his art as a present. Another example is the Trojan horse, argues Johannes Stahl – art as a gift with strings attached. .

Artists have not only offered all sorts of objects but also services for free. E.g. Daniel Spoerri and Rirkrit Tirivandja create events where they organize dinners. In the sense of Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics, the audience is sharing a genuinely social activity – dining together. Jerry Saltz comments⁷:

⁶ Johannes Stahl, Kunst als Give-Away (Art as Give-Away) <http://www.uni-bonn.de/~uph60016/texte/givestahl.htm>

⁷ Jerry Saltz, A short history of Rirkrit Tiravanija - Thai artist who cooks meals as installation art, on Bnet, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_n2_v84/ai_18004723

“Tiravanija is a Potlatch-Conceptualist. The Native American potlatch is a banquet lasting several days, given by a member of the tribe: artistically speaking, that's what Tiravanija does for his art-world tribe. He cooks, you come; he gives, you take. The word potlatch means "big feed," hence Tiravanija is a "feeder." In the dialect of the Northwest Haida tribe, potlatch also means "killing wealth"; in other words, to give something for free is to underline wealth. Tiravanija seems to suggest that as wealth is accumulated, fewer and fewer people can enjoy it. To buy means to strike a deal. Things are clearly understood--a stasis occurs. A gift is different. A gift is more mysterious than property. The weight of a gift continually shifts from giver to receiver, creating reciprocal obligations. A gift also involves an emanation of Eros.”

Handling out gifts through the internet is an approach by contemporary artist Zoe Sheehan Saldana chooses. She breeds plants as an” online performance” monitored by cameras in real-time and gives them away at the end of the project⁸.



Zoe Sheehan Saldana, Homegrown, 2007

During the project “Homegrown” two thousands of images of growing tobacco seeds were captured by a webcam and broadcasted live on the internet during a six week long show.

Zoe Sheehan Saldana uses the medium internet in order to distribute her presents. Other than artists, who invite the audience to share food, she creates a telepresent event for her audience,

⁸ Zoe Sheehan Saldana, <http://www.zoesheehan.com>

who at the same time became during the growth time of the plants became an online community.

In the light of an “attention economy” where perception is valued in the currency of “eye-balls”, these kinds of asymmetric deals may appear less one-sided. We are today used to think of attention as a value, which e.g. advertisers are willing to pay for. Also, they may not lead to actual transactions. This difference manifests itself in the different currencies of pay-per-click or pay-per-view for online advertising⁹.

Internet culture and economy are highly influenced by the idea of the give-away: free software, the open source-movement, Wikipedia and most Web 2.0 characteristics rely on an economy in which sharing and giving are expected as a default attitude. If one may refer to these interactions as transactions which are often driven by idealistic motivations, then the payments seem to be based on primary non-monetary rewards.

Of course, the idea of a free sample as a vehicle leading to further transactions is a well established sales strategy widely applied in the digital economy. The creative commons movement, though not primarily concerned with transactions related to intellectual property, may pave the way for new forms of commercially relevant licensing for sharing and protecting content. In the context of computer software production and the open source movement similar issues are discussed under the name of “copyleft” (see e.g. Antoine Moreau¹⁰).

Less a gift, but also a denial or destruction of economic value is the work of Cesare Pietroiusti covers in the exhibition “Art, Price and Value” in Venice 2008, a wall with 3000 one- and five-dollar bills previously treated with sulphuric acid and stamped on their back side. Due to these interventions each of the banknotes has lost its worth as a currency while being transformed into a unique work of art. The visitors are invited to take one of the bills, on the back side of which Pietroiusti has marked the following instruction: “each monetary transaction involving

⁹ George E. Belch and Michael A. Belch, *Advertising and Promotion*, Mc Graw Hill Irwin, 2008, p. 498

¹⁰ Antoine Moreau, *Copyleft Attitude : une communauté inviolable ?*, 2004
<http://antomoro.free.fr/left/copyleft.html>

this artwork will invalidate the signature of its author and consequently transform it into a fake”.¹¹



Cesare Pietroiusti, *Sulphuric acid on banknotes of 1 and 5 \$* Three thousand originals distributed for free, *Untitled* 2008

First the artist devalues the notes in economic terms and then he encourages people to take them. He points out, that if they would use them in transactions and thereby economically revalidate them. They attempt to reverse somehow the initial conversion from economic into cultural capital and the cultural capital constituted via the signature of the artist would be invalidated as well.

Offering cultural capital in the form of “unused ideas for recycling” without requiring an economic transaction is Maurice Benayoun’s “The openDump.org” In *the-dump.net*¹² he shares his own ideas and non-realized projects on a blog to be picked up by others and “recycle” them.” On the platform *opendump.org* he offers to anybody to install their own dumps. This project may be considered a meta-shop for donating cultural capital or conceptual gift-giving.

For the exhibition “the Art of Participation” curated by Rudolf Frieling at the San Francisco Moma¹³ has the German artist Jochen Gerz set up an exchange of cultural capital. Visitors of the exhibition had the opportunity to pose for portraits in a working photo studio in the galleries. December 19 was the last day of picture taking. Through the close of the exhibition

¹¹ Art, Price and Value, Exhibition, Palazzo Strozzi, 2008, <http://www.strozzina.org/artpriceandvalue/education.html>

¹² Benayoun, Maurice The Dump, <http://www.the-dump.net/> and <http://www.opendump.org/>, 2008

¹³The Art of Participation, 1950-Now, SF Moma, Nov 2008-Feb 2009 http://www.sfmoma.org/pages/exhibitions/details/aop_the_gift

the studio will continue to print and frame the portraits, which will be displayed in rotation on a gallery wall at San Francisco MOMA.

When the exhibition closed, each participant was given a portrait and asked to exhibit it in his or her home or office. Photo documents of these exhibits can be submitted and will be made available online. As Gerz explains, the gift invoked in the work's title is the act of exchange itself: "It is in art as in life: what you give is what you receive."



Jochen Gerz, The Gift, 2010

Having exchanges as a subject but not actually transactional is the work of Antoni Muntadas¹⁴. With his digital image he points to diminishing value makes the sum of \$1,000 disappear through constant conversion from one currency to another.



Antoni Muntadas, The Bank, 1999

The transaction costs of the sum of these transactions finally eat up the original value. This work is intended to be a critique of capital markets and the Forex in particular with their detachment from production, trade and services.

¹⁴ Antoni Muntadas, <http://www.strozzina.org/artpriceandvalue/education.html>

Economic Capital as Personal Finances

Housekeeping is a core concept of for the discipline of economics and transactions are the operational aspect of housekeeping. The word "economy" can be traced back to the Greek word "one who manages a household", derived from *οἶκος*, "house", and *νέμω*, "distribute (especially, manage)". From *οἰκονόμος* "of a household or family" but also senses such as "thrift", "direction", "administration", "arrangement", and "public revenue of a state". The first recorded sense of the word "economy", found in an anonymous work possibly composed in 1440, is "the management of economic affairs." Economy is later recorded in other senses shared by *οἰκονομία* in Greek, including "thrift" and "administration".

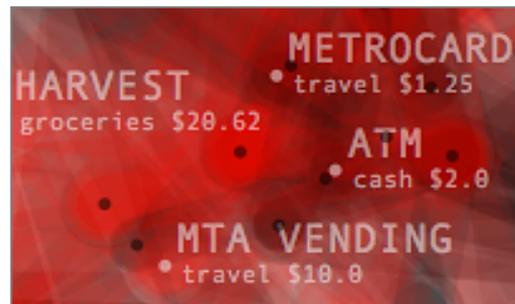
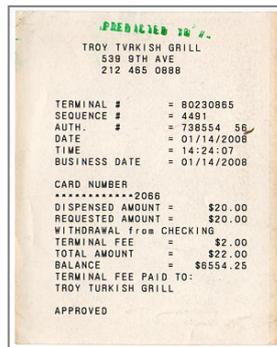
Some artistic work reflects financial accounting as a structure of personal life, often thereby taking the perspective of financial planning. In many cases these works are autobiographically inspired and creatively reflect the artist's suffering from a lack of financial resources. Economic capital is the core theme of these works, but often there are attempts to generate it from other forms of capital.

Art about financial diaries is the following work, where personal finances are the centre of attention is "MyPocket" by Burak Arikan¹⁵ in 2007. He discloses his personal financial records to the world in order to predict his future spending.

"It (the software) explores and reveals essential patterns in the daily transactions of my bank account and discloses my personal financial records to the world. Archived on the site, and updated daily, more than three years of my spending history is analyzed by the custom software to predict future spending everyday; these predictions sometimes determine my future choices, creating a system in which both the software and myself adapt to one another..The Predicted objects are the products of deliberate analysis and living, they are the ready-mades found in the future."

The daily expenses are recorded within a financial frameworks, that is comparable to those financial planners use or balance sheets of companies. After a predicted transaction happens, its receipt is marked with a green stamp, which shows the probability of the prediction. The artist then generates a visualization of his spending patterns. This kind of artistic work reflects financial accounting as a structure of personal life and documents real life transactions.

¹⁵ Burak Arikan, My Pocket, <http://burak-arikan.com/>



Burak Arikan, My Pocket, 2007

Interesting enough, Arikan does not open up his software as a - potentially in some way even commercially viable - internet service. He uses the medium purely as a visualization tool, and offers quasi no interactions or transactions with his audience.

Also Danica Phelps documents her financial and personal transactions. Since 1996 “She notes her financial transactions in dollars, red for expenses, green for income and grey for credit. She not only uses her personal transactions as a form of diary and similar to a corporate account book but associates objects and drawings by her and others around them. The transactions stand for emotional exchange like an accounting book keeping record of the in and out flows. She presents her accounts with drawings by other artists, such as portraitists in Central Park as well as drawings by herself of other artist’s works.¹⁶”

To sum up: in this category of work, a transaction is the subject of some artistic representation of the artworks. The artist’s finances are directly subject to the work, sometimes perhaps like a self-portrait. As in any self-portrait, there may be a more or less strong element of idealization or, in the case of transactional art another kind of enrichment as the next category will show.

Value Creation and Overcoming the Lack of Money

Artists, especially young ones, often suffer from a lack of resources, especially money. Therefore they try to overcome the lack of economic capital. The deficiency of resources is a motif for artists to be circumvented in creative ways and the *creation of wealth in the* form of economic capital is a recurring theme for artist. In business terms, the sustainable creation of money is a business model, which we discuss under the section on business practices. However, we will here discuss various forms of economic value creation, which do not qualify as

¹⁶ Katy Siegel, Paul Mattick. Money, Thames and Hudson, London, 2004, p 144

repeatable, sustainable business models and which do not explicitly cite existing business practices. And we will also discuss other forms of personal wealth creation in other forms of capital.

One approach is to create one's own money. The American artist J. S. G. Boggs explores the nature of money as a medium of exchange and thereby creates value through the creation of his personal currency. Initially he draws by hand; later with the aid of computer technology creates one-sided copies of banknotes.



Boggs Bills, Francs bill, late 1980s with Boggs counterfeit, \$10 FUNback (Florida United Numismatists) 1997

He spends these "Boggs notes" only for their face value. If he draws a \$10 bill, he exchanges it for \$10 worth of goods. He then sells any change he gets, the receipt, and sometimes the goods he purchased as his "artwork." If the art collector intends to acquire a Boggs note he is forced to track it down by following the hints Boggs gives about where and when he intends to exchange a bill. Boggs will indicate a collector where he spent the note, but will not sell them directly. Craig Saper writes: "Boggs art is to create new forms of exchange systems, not to simply parody government's currencies, but to create artificial value."¹⁷ He creates an "intimate community of those involved in the transactions" a form of social capital coming along with the artist's transactional system.

¹⁷ Craig Saper, *Networked Economies – Six Degrees of Boggs*, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue5/saper>

In the 1990ties Boggs printed also plastic coins and used the same mechanism for bringing them into circulation of the real economy. ¹⁸ Being subject to various accusations of counterfeiting and forgery is evidence for his entrenchment with the arena of existing and legally protected economies.¹⁹

Olav Velthuis²⁰ witnessed how the artist actually tries to exchange his notes in a bar:

"Do you think they will accept Boggs money here," he asks in an old Amsterdam bar. Boggs insists that I will not intervene during the transaction, and promptly walks to the bar with a gentle smile on his face. Then he explains to the barkeeper with a charming voice: "Hi, I am an artist; I make my own money, and I try to spend it in real transactions. Today I would like to spend my money with you. These coins represent the value of a dollar. Would you accept four of them in exchange for two beer?"

The lady looks puzzled and doubts if she should accept his offer. Before she can answer, however, her husband intervenes: "Paying with fake money is impossible," he says aggressively, "is playing a trick" [in Dutch the husband used the word "kunstenmakerij," which means both "making art," and "playing a trick"]. Unsolicited, the barkeeper continues that he has been making his own living for thirty-five years, and urges Boggs to support himself with honest means as well. The next day, many refusals of his coins will follow, even at the coin shops located behind Dam Square. There is a striking pattern in the responses that his proposal evokes. Out of disbelief, men react irritated, while women often start giggling -- an indication for social scientists that some taboo is being violated. Never does Boggs mention that the deal he

¹⁸ Mary Rayme, *JSG Boggs – Counterfeit Art*, 2007,
http://artsociety.suite101.com/article.cfm/jsg_boggs_counterfeit_art

¹⁹ Jesse Walker (2000), *The Art of the Deal*, J.S.G. Boggs draws money for a living – What is his exchange rate?, <http://www.reason.com/news/show/27822.html>

²⁰ Olav Velthuis, *In Boggs We Trust*, An earlier, abridged version of this article was published in: *Dagblad Trouw* (Dutch National Newspaper), Saturday February 24 2001
http://www.toutfait.com/issues/volume2/issue_4/articles/velthuis/velthuis2.html

is offering them is an offer nobody can refuse -- after all, even the coins are worth much more than their face value on the resale market for Boggs' work.

This episode shows that Boggs tries to pay with his self-made bills, and prefers to transact with people who are unaware of the value of a Boggs Bill as objectified cultural capital. Those who would know the value of such a bill would be aware of the mostly advantageous deals. But the artist seems to try to filter out counterparties, who are aware of this knowledge and prefers those who actually have the cultural capital to *recognize* the value of his art, or who are for whatever reason receptive to his offer. He addresses these “innocent” (most probably not equipped with the cultural capital of an education) counterparties, in the hope that they value the work for its, what he calls, “intrinsic value”. As did once the waitress, who “discovered” Boggs first scribble of a one dollar note and wanted to purchase it for 40 USD²¹. Those who do not possess either the explicit cultural capital to know of Boggs Bills or the cultural capital to *recognize* some sort of value are both in an disadvantage and will not have access to the economic gains, the deal actually offers. Interesting also, that the artist does not sell his art, but only through the injection into the economic circle art his objectified cultural capital in the form of artworks can be captured and returned into the art arena.

Boggs as an transactional artist not only creates values for himself and makes a living through his direct exchanges, he also deliberately seem to circumvent the classical art audience with its forms of cultural capital, embodied and objectified. He carefully targets and filters the audience he is directly transacting with, probably of course aware, the aesthetic value of his work is exactly derived from his apparent circumvention of the forms of cultural capital.

Some artists following Duchamp’s declarative act explore the mechanism of value creation through signing an art work, or even making a signature the subject of the artwork itself²². Sean Landers paints his own signature and therefore creates value and makes it the object of the painting itself. He makes his status as an artist i.e. his symbolic capital subject of an artwork, thereby creates aesthetic capital, which may be sold for economic capital as an objectified cultural value. However, this kind of transformations of capital does not involve a transactional

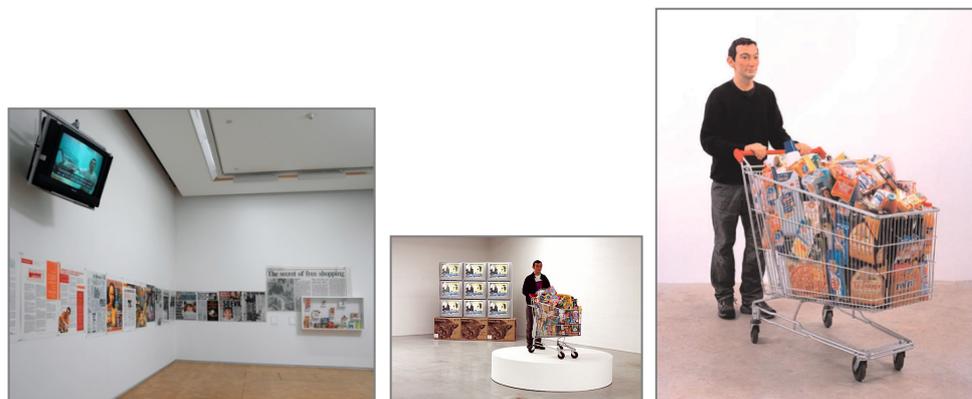
²¹ From Interview of Magazine *Egg* with J.S.G Boggs, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/egg/217/boggs/> “In 1984

²² Book on declarative acts on Duchamp. (AMD tip)

component, it *declares* the coexistence of the values involved, but does not actively exchange them as part of the art work.

In another work Sean Landers reflects on his student debt. He initially defaulted on paying back his student loan in time and created an artwork by documenting his correspondence with the student loan lender. Selling this work made it finally possible to pay for the loan²³. Here the aesthetization and objectification of the documents of a deficiency become through the presentation as an artwork valuable, they create some sort of aesthetic capital, which was then converted into a financial value – thereby relieving the artist from an unpleasant legal obligation²⁴.

Another witty case of making an unconventional form of “living” is Mathieu Laurette’s famous series of works named *Produits remboursés/Money-back Products* (1993-2001).



Mathieu Laurette, Moneyback Life! Freebe King, 2001

Laurette pursued a lifestyle with almost only on buying goods with “Satisfied or Your Money Back” or “Money Back on First Purchase” offers and then being fully refunded on the basis of the products not maximizing his utility. As a result, he could practically not spend a single cent on his daily living. Due to regulations companies are obliged to accept their products back from unsatisfied customers. Laurette extracts use-value of products before he returns them and regains their full exchange value back. He apparently bases his existence on this witty exploitation of a policy invented to protect consumers. The used-up use value not only

²³ Saun Landers, *Attn: Miss Gonzales*, in: Katy Siegel, Paul Mattick. *Money*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2004, p 68

²⁴ *Ibid.*

apparently helps to generate a living, but also serves as material for the creation of cultural capital in the form of this conceptual artwork.

Karl Heinz Jeron²⁵ in his piece “Will Work for Food” creates small robots, which are sent to the audience in exchange for food sent to the artist. The robots can be “rented” for food and have the ability to draw and whistle. Users can send in food to an address and then get the vehicle for home use. After use, the robots have to be returned to the artist; otherwise the user may receive “very bad karma”. Since the robots are not the consumers of the food therefore the installation seems to subsidize the artist himself. The recipient provides food and the artist sends him a robot in return, which performs an audio visual artwork, an aesthetic product, which can be kept. On a good will basis the vehicles will be returned to the artist. Jeron apparently chose not to appear as a business entity, even though the set up of this work may actually be considered a kind of business model.

Since the food has to be given in advance by the audience buys - so to speak - into the promise of the deliverance of the robots. This is an interesting detail since the transaction is demanded by the artist in advance; a deal is made from both sides. In a sense Jeron creates his own employees, or swarm of sales men, which support him with energy, which close the economic circle and facilitate their maintenance. These employees generate aesthetic products, are themselves a kind of aesthetic workforce and convey their work force into material value, such as food.



Karl Heinz Jeron, Will work for Food, 2007

Jeron intends to reflect on the nature of labor with this work and the utopian dream of a life of free labor. Therefore the robot may be viewed as a working agent, or the worker, who is rented

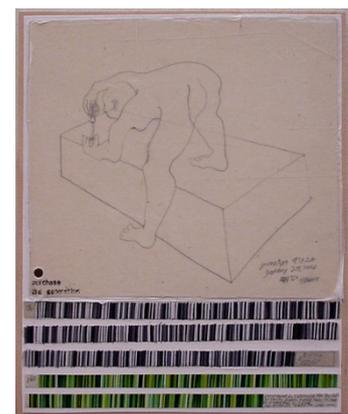
²⁵ Karl Heinz Jeron, *Will Work For Food*, 2007, <http://willworkforfood.projektraum.org>

out for food. The food may be considered the added value premium in the Marxian sense, but however it is simply food and nothing that could accumulate towards capital as in Marx capitalistic accumulation of value on the capitalist's behalf. As Jeron puts it, this work is about barter economy and the exchange of work for a survival requirement. Thereby - again - the artist is profiting and demands a resource for living from the audience. However, in a trusting attitude, with a higher risk of loss and damage, than a business would tolerate.

Another kind of barter system is introduced by Danica Phelps²⁶. In "Writer's Trade" she trades her own drawings with writers who in turn submit essays about aspects of her work. She creates a kind of barter economy for aesthetic capital, art works are traded for artworks without any other currencies.

In "Artist Collector", Curator, Spy 2001, she pretended to be an art collector, visited galleries and took digital photos of the exhibited artworks. She then created her own images and drawings from these works and offered them to the artists in exchange for the original. All processes of decision making and acquisitions were documented and exhibited by her as part of her own art works.

In other words, she stole originals, copied them and offered the copies to the artists back. If these deals were accepted and what the reactions were, is part of the artwork. Again, she invents a barter economy amongst artists, who can enter deals according to their self-estimations of their worth.



Danica Phelps: Writers Trade, 2004

²⁶Danica Phelps, *Writer's Trade*, 2004, www.grinnell.edu

Is a “Danica Phelps” original more worth than a piece by a young and completely unknown artist? Is being stolen by her a kind of privilege, a “nobilitaiton”, in the sense of Bourdieu? Is it a gain, or is it a loss for the artist? Is value added? However, the result of these offers and potential deals are documented as artwork themselves and can be bought by the audience. The audience therefore may acquire the documentation or objectification of a counter economy, a potential deal or its rejection, which constitutes the artwork.

Institutional Transactions- Creation of Capital by Implementation of Business Practices

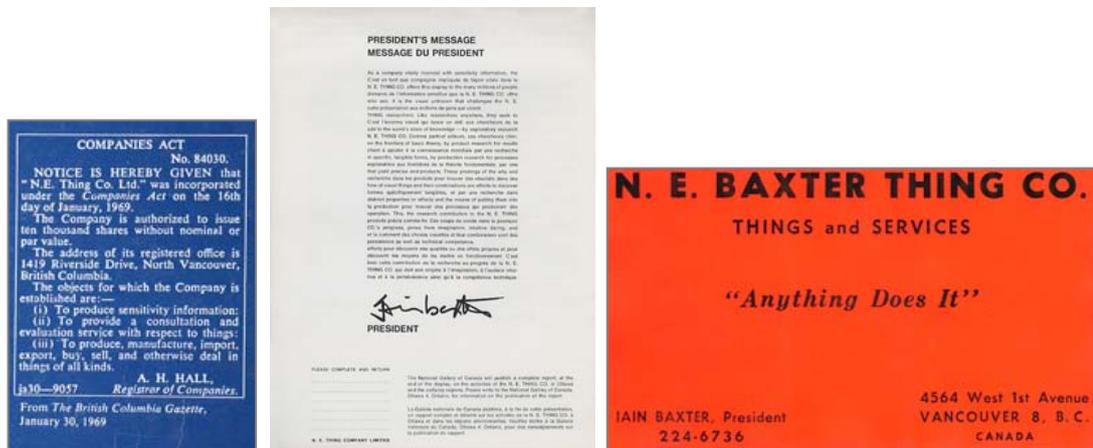
As the core of transactional art we consider artworks, which actually apply business practices and thereby are often insitutionalised in the form of a buisness entity, sometimes even legally registered as companies. This kind of artwork ranges from all sorts of organisational mimicry and declarations of value to new forms of business models. The latter we find especially interesting, as they seem fullfill not only aesthetic, but also economic criteria. As interdisciplinary projects, they seem to earn merits in the different value systems of the domains involved. Many of these artworks use the internet to allow for transactions of money and rely on it as a transactional medium.

For the classificaiton we will start with the core topics for any business corporation: its form of organisation and financing, its value creating processes, such as manufacturing and/or service-providing and of course distribution and marketing. Recent business trends, such as comissioning and outsourcing, collaboration with the consumers are also thematised. And since no business is isolated, we also touch on socalled value systems, where several businesses are connected and interact and transact with each other. Of course here contracting and legal agreements come into play and some artists,mostly conceptual artists, have created contracts as art. Also highly relational is the final category, which is about the creation of social capital. Here artists experiment with social capital and offer forms of exclusivity as a product.

Organisation and Financing

An early protagonist is Canadian artist Ian Baxter&, who founded the “conceptual enterprise” in 1966 and officially incorporated it in 1969 and was run until 1978 with his wife. Mission of this enterprise was to “produce sensitivity information; ii. To provide a consultation and

evaluation service with respects to things; iii. To produce, manufacture, import, export, sell, and otherwise deal in things of all kinds.”²⁷



Ian Baxter, N.E. Thing Company, officially incorporated 1969 (various documents)

“Everything that needs to be taken and learned from business shall then be adapted to the artistic context of its implementation: logo, letterheads, stamps, slogans posters, badges, etc. art claims its right to be everywhere. Art is all over.”²⁸ In the form of a company various value creating activities in the field of “sensitive information experiments” are performed over time, including an expedition to an arctic circle, business consulting services, a photo lab and a restaurant.” To infiltrate the world of business require devising a program that is both, credible and viable.”²⁹ Similarly to the works we have seen earlier it seems the company is actually designed to help to secure the artist an income, however, this form of survival existence is aestheticized in itself and intertwined with other activities, such as a journey to the Antarctica. The construct of a company not only generates economic and cultural capital at the same time and allows converting it into each other smoothly with the advantages of a legally registered business entity.

Similarly seems Bernard Brunon’s *That’s Painting Productions*, founded in 1989 in Houston Texas, a value creating strategy of an artist, who used to make a living with painting services

²⁷ Vox, Image contemporaine, Contemporary image, Ian Baxter project website, http://www.voxphoto.com/fd/baxter/en/projet_7.html

²⁸ Iain Baxter &, in: Toma, Yann, *Critical Companies*, p. 238, 2008.

²⁹ Ibid.

and at the same time stipulated it as an artwork. The aim of “*That’s Painting Productions* is “to manage a painting activity informed by reflections on representation”.³⁰ As in many examples of transactional arts, we have the coexistence of various forms of capital, which are converted into each other. Here the accumulation of economic capital is at the same time an accumulation of cultural capital – the conversion depends on the perspective. For a regular client ordering the services (the artist positions his services in the premium quality sector of the market for affordable prices) it may just be a normal service, from an-perspective the same work may appear as a reflective and artistic experiment and a real service delivery transaction is declared as an artwork.

The art groups Etoy³¹ and RTMark³² not only mimic the organizational structure, appearance and rhetoric of multinational corporations, they also issue stocks and/or mutual funds in order to allow the audience to support their activities. Both fall into the category of internet activism, a politically and usually ant-capitalistic motivated approach to media art.

The members of Etoy designed their unique “corporate identity” including graphic designs, uniforms, temporary architecture etc. They managed to create a subversive, “pseudo-corporate” atmosphere and issued stocks as a private company. These stocks have later been “materialized” into tangible products, such as brass plates, in order to cater to the demands of an object oriented art market by offering some sort of tangible values.

*“Etoy is art and invests all resources in the production of more art. The firm represents the core and code of the corporate sculpture, and controls, protects, promotes, and exploits the cultural substance (intellectual property) and the Etoy ART-COLLECTION. Etoy intends to reinvest all financial earnings in art - the final link in the value chain.”*³³

Similarly to the compounding of interest, Etoy aims to reinvest and increase their cultural capital. They promise to transform the economic capital invested by the shareholders into

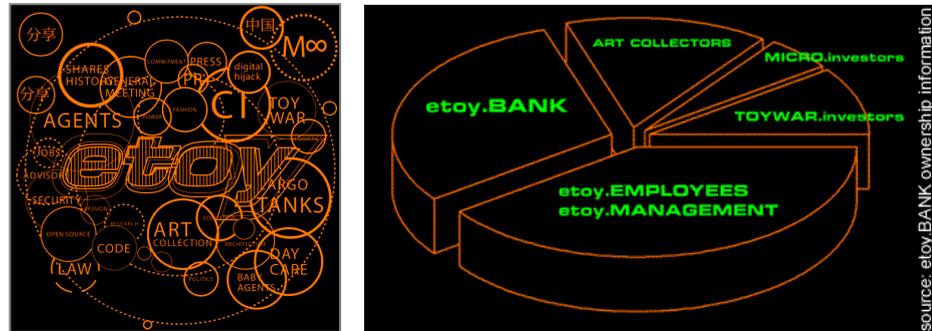
³⁰ Bernard Brunon, *That’s Painting Productions*, in: Toma, Yann, *Critical Companies*, p. 407, 2008.

³¹ Etoy, <http://www.etoym.com/fundamentals/>

³² RTMark, RTMark: Your Real Corporation Clearinghouse, <http://www.rtmk.com>

³³ Ibid.

cultural capital and following the mechanics of compounding interest offer to increase the cultural capital, (of course not the economic capital). The Etoy CEO with the name *etoy.ZAI 2001* states their preferences on forms of capital: "Money and shares are the objects of our desire but art is what we would kill for."³⁴



Etoy company overview and Etoy shares, since 1995

The diagrams above are examples, how Etoy’s artifacts often have the character of meta-art, since they refer to the organizational structure, activities and production forms of the artists themselves.

Etoy has been active since the mid nineties with various projects, including the *Digital High-Jack* (1996) a manipulated search engine, which would capture its users and *Mission Eternity* (since 2005), a service addressing issues of conserving information beyond death. The so-called *Toywar* (1999/2000) was a famous online dispute in 1999 about the domain name leading to one of the first massive internet mobilizations in favor of an activist group versus a publicly listed multinational corporation; in this case the internet toy retailer Etoy.Inc. The battle over similar domain names and the accusation of trademark dilution (among others) led to a lawsuit with an injunction to close the activist’s website. However, the EToys soon dropped the lawsuit and the art group’s website went back to operation.

According to “Etoy’s Corporation’s” their mobilization incurred the loss of \$4.5 billion dollars in market capitalization; after ”more than 8 billion dollars” at the beginning of the conflict. Therefore the “performance” has been coined as the “most expensive in art history”. (<http://toywar.eto.com/>). This monocausal explanation may be part of an overstatement by the

³⁴ Etoy website, <http://shareholders.eto.com/>

art group, however, it is one of the first cases where the power of internet-based viral marketing and mouth to mouth communication was demonstrated and massively damaged the stock value of a public listed company. Communication in the interactive media internet affected “real” financial values. In Bourdieu’s terms: social capital heavily affects economic capital. And, internet activism discovered the transactional power of its medium.

Another prominent activist group is RTMark (the name is derived from "Registered Trademark") which brings together activist projects and potential investors. The audience, similarly to Etoy has the chance to become investors. The interaction between audience and artist is that of a transaction, the audience becomes an investor, lending his resources to an enterprise he believes in. The artists pool apparently the funds, like any investment trust would do. However, the investments may not always follow the laws of risk and return, as in the financial system and we do not really know anything about the flows of capital behind this artistic corporation. RTMark is one of the few art-groups who not only consistently mimic the corporate rhetoric but also some of the mechanism of business and financial worlds.



RT Mark, since 1998

The artists of RTMark make explicitly reference to the financial system and the mechanisms of investing. They state on their website:

RT Mark

- *RT Mark is a “Company” which allows incubation of cutting-edge cultural ventures, while providing a unique opportunity for private investors to sponsor these activities*

Veneer

- *A pioneer in developing a quantitative measure of cultural value called cultural capital*

- *Veneer™ is the utilization of pre-trend market indicators to fake corporate accountability, environmental protectionism, and social responsibility*
- *A way of seeing what's in and what's not similar to the business world.*

Protester

- *Protester™s project incubator allows activists to propose actions, meet and collaborate with others, and measure the success or failure of their work. Protester is designed for those who understand the need for creative approaches to the world's social justice issues.*

In the *Acceptable Risk*³⁵ project for example RTMark develops a risk calculator for public and governmental risks. The highly polemic texts suggest that governments and corporation have golden skeletons in the closet, due to their irresponsible acceptance of risks, which endanger the public, especially those groups which are not part of the privileged classes of western societies, such as the Bhopal disaster.



RTMark, Acceptable Risk, 2005

They claim: “Amazingly enough, though, there is still no tool to help us in business know what risk is acceptable, and what isn't. We stumble along with our unspoken rules, hoping against hope our decisions make sense. “ They hereby neglect a whole industry of so called “risk-management”, not only in the field of financial services, but also a practice to be addressed in any business. Despite their polemic, and use of business terminology the artists display a certain superficial knowledge about how the issues are actually addressed. Unfortunately they lack the domain knowledge to make a plausible and also artistic serious contribution to the subject. However, RTMark charmingly introduces “Gilda, the Golden Skeleton” as a mascot for the initiative.

³⁵ RTMark <http://www.dowethics.com/risk/launch.html>

Users of the platform may also post projects, such as the “Barbie Liberation Organization”, in which the voice-boxes of talking Barbie and GI Joe toys were swapped, and the toys then returned to the store (1993). The RTMark platform serves not only as a funding marketplace but also as a medium for the communication of other activist initiatives. In this sense the platform combines features of so called “ideagoras” where users can post their tasks to be solved/realized and peer-to-peer finance marketplaces³⁶, where internet users can try to raise funds for any (legal) purpose/enterprise.

Another well known work initiated by RTMark was “Voteauction”³⁷ intervening into the process of political decision making. United States citizens were offered the ability to sell their presidential vote to the highest bidder during the 2000 US presidential election. The website was later moved to the art-group Uebermorgen in Austria since various US States sued the site for alleged illegal vote trading.³⁸

Rank	Electoral Votes	State	Winning Bid
01	17	New Jersey (NJ)	\$1,000
02	7	West Virginia (WV)	\$1,000
03	3	Washington (WA)	\$1,000
04	3	Ohio (OH)	\$1,000
05	3	Arkansas (AR)	\$1,000
06	3	Indiana (IN)	\$1,000
07	3	Illinois (IL)	\$1,000

Uebermorgen, Voteauction, 2000

RTMark explicitly refers to financial concepts, such as “investing”, “mutual funds”, risk management” etc. They thereby ask the question of the value and “return of investment” more directly than Etoy. As they state on their FAQ section of the website, their aim is “cultural profit”, which directly resonates Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital”.

³⁶ See also O-d-o.com project in the practical part.

³⁷ Uebermorgen, www.vote-auction.net

³⁸ Though we did not introduce the notion of “political capital” the value this work is accumulating is probably something like political capital.

So ®TMark is just a corporation? ®™ark is indeed just a corporation, and benefits from corporate protections, but unlike other corporations, its "bottom line" is to improve culture, rather than its own pocketbook; it seeks cultural profit, not financial...Just as ordinary corporations are solely and entirely machines to increase their shareholders' wealth (often to the detriment of culture and life) so ®™ark is a machine to improve its shareholders' culture and life (sometimes to the detriment of corporate wealth).

Interesting enough, these activist groups use capitalistic financing techniques in order to realize critical artworks with an anti-capitalistic flair. The transactions involve a sympathetic audience who is offered the chance to contribute and/or invest as some sort of commissioning or sponsoring. Anticipating and facilitating these interactions and transactions via the RT mark corporation as a brokerage has become the artwork itself. The interactive medium internet is used as a transactional medium in this kind of work.

Another art-group addressing the theme of an “as-if” company are “The Yes Men”. They are a group of media activists who practice what they call "identity correction" by pretending to be spokespersons for prominent organizations. They imitate websites similar to ones they want to spoof, and then interact via these virtual identities. E.g. they accept invitations received on the spoof websites to appear at conferences, symposiums and TV shows. Their newfound, self-proclaimed authority to express the idea that corporations and governmental organizations often act in dehumanizing ways toward the public has met both positively and negatively with political overtones. In the famous Bhopal project they manage to broadcast an interview on BBC promising a massive financial compensation for the Bhopal victims as a humanitarian gesture for the 20th anniversary of the catastrophe.



The Yes Men, Andy Bichlbaum alias Dow Chemical spokesman “Jude Finisterra” on BBC News, 2004

Here the artists do not actually perform a spectacular transaction, but gain their impact through the spectacular, yet satirical promise of it and their plausible spoof by Dow Chemical (the owner company of Dow Chemical, which caused the incident) spokesman “Jude Finisterra” broadcasted as breaking news on BBC television on on December 3, 2004, the twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal disaster. As in other transactional artworks, the artists have to empower themselves, here by claiming successfully to represent an economically powerful organization like Dow Chemical. They also manage overcome the social boundaries, since the BBC during their diligence process did not uncover the artists as fake. The value of these spectacular news, may have led to this kind of negligence at the time, with an image loss for BBC, but even a bigger PR damage for the actual company who did not at all intend to compensate victims. The mere promise of the transaction made as a satirical means conveyed in a genial way the artist’s message. The artist’s merit of course is besides the aesthetic and conceptual value, the masterpiece of tricking an honorable news institution like the BBC.

Production, Manufacturing and Services

The management and strategy theoretician Michael Porter describes the concept of a “value chain³⁹” as a sequence of procedures which create a product or service and basically add value in every step. Any business is basically a value chain, adding value in every step of the operation but value chains can also be created across various organizations. We will find examples of artworks, which create value in both ways.(see below, “vertical integration”).

Wim Delvoye’s *Cloaca Shit Project*^{40 41} is a value chain mimicking the body function of digestion for the creation of energy. The appearance of the installation imitates industrial manufacturing machinery. Value is created by the processing of food. Additionally to reconstructing the human digestion as an industrial process, the artist creates all sorts of

³⁹ Value chain analysis describes the activities within and around an organization, and relates them to an analysis of the competitive strength of the organization. See Appendix..

⁴⁰ Wim Delvoye , <http://www.cloaca.be>

⁴¹ <http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/reviews/fiers/fiers1-9-01.asp>

merchandizing products around this enterprise, ranging from graphics, logos etc to the online sale of the excrements produced. He also issues specially designed shares by”Cloaka Investments Limited”.



Wim Delvoye, Cloaka Shit Project, since 2000

Delvoye commercializes not only creates a synthetic body but also an industrial value-chain. The machinisation of the human body, and not for example the human mind, as it was the aim of artificial intelligence and information technology creates some aesthetic value pointing perhaps the attention of the audience to questions of meaning of life. What does the product of energy, which we seem to command on so effortless, empower us to do? Though there is no monetary transaction involved, this project does reflect the transformation of economic capital, in the form of food, as a life sustaining requirement to any other form of capital or contribution, man can make. The project refers to the very basic level of satisfaction of needs: that of the generation of energy to live.

Management and Improving Operations

Value in the economic sense can, roughly speaking, be created via processes leading to the manufacturing of products, their distribution (shops, buying and selling) and/or through services. “Management Consulting” is a service, which artist have used in their art thereby creating value.

Value creation via management consulting was explored by artists like Carey Young and Christian Jankowski. Carey Young⁴² offers conflict resolution services on the street as a performance in the public space.



Carey Young, Conflict Management, 2003

She assembles “a professional arbitrator, table, chairs, two notice boards, media advertising, and members of the public”⁴³ and let offers apparently for free the services of the mediator. The artist hires or somehow sponsors the services of a professional conflict management consultant and offers it to her audience. If we consider these business services as added value, both in terms of cultural and potentially economic capital, then the audience really gets a gain in both domains: first the cultural capital in the form of conflict management know-how, which is a free gift by the artist and on the level of an artwork, the aesthetic value or cultural capital as an experience provided by an artist. Again, the artist somehow does not mark her performance as art, though it probably does stand out from a daily experience of conflict management, since Young transfers the service into the public space.

The British artist Carey Young features in her *Optimum Performance*⁴⁴ an actor dressed as a businessman, who delivers a motivational but satirical speech to the Whitechapel's gallery audience as if they were a group of his professional colleagues. The piece has a self-reflexive

⁴² Carey Young, <http://www.careyyoung.com/>

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Carey Young, *Optimum Performance*, 2003, Performance at the Whitechapel Gallery documented as a single channel video (on DVD); colour, sound. 14.35 mins, <http://www.careyyoung.com/past/optimumperformance.html>

core - a performance designed to enhance performance. Young exposes her art audience to the managerial motivational and leadership rhetoric from the corporate world.



Carey Young, Optimum Performance, 2003

If we consider business know how and managerial knowledge as a kind of cultural knowledge as well (in the sense that it also may require a certain training and education), then this performance performs a transition of cultural capital *about* the creation of economic capital back into the cultural domain. This transition however, is recognizable and meant to be viewed as an art work.

A work using the services of a professional sponsored management consultant is the work “Point of Sale” by Christian Jankowski.⁴⁵ The artist lets a strategic management consultant analyze two businesses: an art gallery and its next door neighbor, which happens to be an electronics shop. The interviews plus the analysis by the consultant are presented via a video installation.

⁴⁵ Christian Jankowski, Point of Sale, Video Installation, 2002

3 channel video installation: 3 DVDs, plus 1 Digi Beta Submaster (archival master)<http://www.icaboston.org/exhibitions/permanent-collection/artists/jankowski/>



Christian Jankowski, Point of Sale, 2002

Surprisingly the artist has decided to let the gallery owner answer for the electronics shop owner and vice versa. This is an interesting twist and perhaps a disguise of the strategic knowledge that otherwise would have been revealed through the consultant and within the installation. Like so often in transactional art, the work itself leaves many questions open about the deals on which it is actually based. The documentation does not include the structure of the deal, which made this work possible and traditional interpretations also do not tend to ask for the system of exchange behind the works. However, here it is possible, that the owners insisted to switch roles, or that it actually was an idea by the artist, in order to point the attention of the audience to the secretive nature of strategic, business-sensitive know-how. How was this deal negotiated?

Many artists, who actually apply transactional strategies, do not reveal those strategies, though one could think, since modern art has anything made as subject, this seems somehow a surprise. As mentioned earlier, it may be considered violating aesthetic principles and of course an “elliptic representation” of the deals seems also more artistic, than their explication. Artists have reflected intimate aspects of their production, but artistic exhibitionism seems not to cover transactional strategies.

Distribution - Shops, Buying, Selling and Auction Art

These kinds of artworks choose the form of a shop or other ways to buy or sell something. In transactional arts buying and selling may become means of artistic expression. Often artists experience no demand for these offers at all. Suggesting potential transactions become the artwork, even if these transactions never actually happen.

Installation art in the form of shops has been extensively explore by artists like Christine Hill with her “Volksboutique” installations, which only in the very beginning allowed the audience

to actually purchase the items. On her website writes the artist: “Volksboutique presents a forum for production, exhibition and exchange. The establishment of a familiar arena to illustrate where artistic experience should be lived.” The arenas of art and life are intertwined, at least at first sight. And she quotes Kim Levin at the same site from “the Volksboutique Guide, 1997”:

"Hill's Volksboutique can be called a second hand store. Or it can be called a participatory artwork that takes the form of a functioning salesroom and workshop space. Simultaneously a shop, an evolving installation, a space for performance, a slice of life, and an amorphous messy inclusive work open to all questions, it absorbs found objects as compositional elements and viewers as participants. Above all, Volksboutique is a place of informal human exchange that raises the conceptual stakes."



Christine Hill, Volksboutique Project since 1990ties, here Armory Apothecary, March 2009

Similarly to the consultation art works, Hill offers her advice and recommendations of a remedy after a short conversation with the customer. For 20\$ the audience can acquire various specially assembled medications, provided by the artist⁴⁶. The booth is installed during an art show as the representation for the artist’s gallery. The experience of shopping is “translocated” into the art world; the artist herself sells her artistic artifacts under the cover of a medical remedy. Since Christine Hill has built up a reputation as a contemporary artist, the monetary value of these artifacts on the art market may as in the case of Duchamp, Boggs and others also much higher than the asked price.

⁴⁶ Christine Hill, Video about *Armory Apothecary, March 2009*, The Armory Show 2009 New York <http://vernissage.tv/blog/2009/03/06/christine-hill-the-volksboutique-armory-apothecary/>

An earlier example from 1961 is the installation by Claes Oldenbourg *The Store- – 2nd Street NY*^{47 48} where he rented at the Lower East Side in New York. He manufactured the items; one may find a neighborhood store out of chicken wire and papier-mâché, plaster and paint and sold these replicas in the shop. So the shop again becomes a kind of gallery, though again under-cover with the overlay of the value of artwork and apparent mimicry of real life.



Claes Oldenbourg, The Store- – 2nd Street NY, 1961

A shop in the form of a stand which sold small objects was part of Franco Mondini Ruiz' participation in the 2000 *Whitney Biennial*..⁴⁹ He still continues his *Infinito Botanica* selling performances. The *Feast without Famine* was held in May 2008.

“A true, non-stop feast of visual and conceptual delights will await the visitor to Mondini-Ruiz's exhibit/art buffet, consisting of a collection of new sculptures, porcelains, art world piñatas, and paintings in all sizes. He will offer an ever-changing array of art goodies ranging in price from \$10.00 to \$10,000.00, ensuring no one goes away hungry. The artist will be on the premises throughout the show serving art, conversation, and strategies for a utopic, better world of feast without famine.”

⁴⁷ Katy Siegel, Paul Mattick, *Money*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2004, p 114

⁴⁸ Frieze Blog, http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/taking_stock

⁴⁹ Homepage of the Frederike Taylor Gallery, NYC, <http://www.frederiketaylorgallery.com/2008Apr.html>



Franco Mondini Ruiz, Infinito Botanica- The Feast without Famine, 2008

The artist here decides not to give away anything for free, but to cater to audiences with weaker economic means and thereby include them into the target audience. Like the art-as-giveaway approach however, he does not exclude audiences with a lower spending power of economic capital from the reception and acquisition of cultural capital. The artist deliberately markets to *any* target group by his pricing strategy. As so often in transactional arts, motivations in general, or here specifically the thoughts leading to the assignment of value are not explicated within the aesthetic discourse.

Maurice Benayoun's "Emotion Vending Machine" is a work which makes use of a distribution channel of the vending machine – though apparently without the insertion of money. But instead of choosing beverages, the user can customize ring tones for his mobile phone and download the output of a web query on emotions as "emotional cocktails".⁵⁰

"Users select three from a list of nine emotions, such as "fear", "joy" or "ecstasy", and validate their choices. The machine, built around a search-engine application, browses the world network and displays the result in the shape of words representing the previously selected emotions, accompanied by sounds composed by Jean-Baptiste Barrière. Users can then connect their USB flash drive and collect their musical emotional cocktails, each of which is prepared in real-time and therefore unique."

French artist Orlan made also use of the transactional interface of a vending machine in her the famous performance *The Artist's Kiss*⁵¹ from 1977. She turns a life-size photo of her torso turned into a slot machine. After inserting a coin, the image was lowered to the ground and the buyer received a kiss from the artist standing on a pedestal.

⁵⁰ Maurice Benayoun *Emotion Ringtones Mechanics of Emotions* <http://www.benayoun.com/projet.php?id=117>

⁵¹ Orlan, *The Artist's Kiss, (Le baiser de l'artiste)*, <http://www.orlan.net>, 1977

Indian artist Shilpa Gupta with *Xeno-Bio-Lab.com* creates a supermarket for “Take-Away-Kidneys”, which she exhibits in an installation apparently for sale. Her aim is to highlight the financial despair, which makes donators in poor countries exchange parts of their bodies for financial capital- thereby exposing themselves to serious health risks.



Shilpa Gupta, Xeno-Bio-Lab.com, 2004

The awarded work is a E-commerce websites as well as an installation in the form of a shop, yet without mentioning of prices for real transactions. Without facilitating any actual transactions, with this pseudo-supermarket the artist highlights effectively her moral disapproval with the global organ markets and medical tourism.

The internet as a distribution channel is a obvious choice for transactional artists in the age of E-commerce. Mejour Vida, which we will discuss in a following chapter on social capital is only one example, which we subsume under more specific categories. But one way of distribution on the internet we would like to introduce here: that of auction art.

Auction art relies on existing auction platforms, a development facilitated by internet. so called “auction artists”⁵² use existing market platforms such as eBay for highly conceptual artworks to distribute i.e. auction off some sort of offer. Thereby they may reach other audiences, which traditionally would not be within the classical art audience.

Carey Peppermint, e.g. allows the online audience to conceptualize an artwork, which he, in the tradition of conceptual art will then execute and document. The documentation in the form of a video tape he then sends to the commissioner, who together with the artist holds the

⁵² Atkins, R., Art as Auction, <http://www.mediachannel.org/arts/perspectives/auction/index.shtml>

intellectual property rights. The artist presents this being at service in a way that hardly anything would be an impossible, though he excludes sexual and immoral requests.

Here the artist involves the audience to actually participate in the strategic part of the creation of an artwork. He manages to isolate what could be called the “strategic creativity”, the purely conceptual aspect similar to a brief for the artist. Interestingly he extends artistic creativity towards this kind of strategic brief and is considers it as a relevant contribution to the art work. Therefore he is willing to share the IP rights with his co-creators.



Carey Peppermint , High Bidder, 2000

Jeff Gates tries to auction off in vain his private data and shopping and TV viewing habits thereby critically referring to practices of digital customer relationship management. He finally creates “handsome limited edition prints” of the data and manages to sell them to friends. Again, a conceptual internet artwork seems to demand some sort of materialization in order to become sellable.



Jeff Gates (no title), ca 2002

In a similar piece, Michael Daines offers his own body “body, with minor imperfections”. As Carey Peppermint he excludes sexual connotations but does offer and thematizes the economic concept of availability of the workforce.



The Body of Michael Daines, 2000

*Ebayaday*⁵³ is a month-long serial exhibit, using eBay as venue, beginning 9 a.m. PST, Dec. 1, 2006. Curated by Rebekah Modrak, Aaron Ahuvia and Zackery Denfeld, ebayaday consists of 25 auctions (one debuts each day) in which the entire eBay listing (item for sale, descriptive text and imagery and placement within chosen categories) is the artwork. Works presented in the show exploit, redefine or underscore eBay's potential in the exchange of ideas, objects and commerce. The artists chosen for the show received instructions for the day and time to post their listing in a 7-day online auction. The first of the 25 auctions began December 1st 2006 and the last auction ended on January 1st, 2007.

“Unlike the thousands of traditional art objects for sale on eBay at any given moment, the pieces in ebayaday incorporate the various methods and systems of eBay as elements in the work. Each aspect of the listing (item for sale, descriptive text and placement within chosen categories) is a part of the artwork. Keywords (used to search for items) and descriptions within listings may elaborate on physical characteristics of an item, but may also describe that item's history or train potential buyers in how to operate, employ, love or neglect that which is for sale.”⁵⁴

In addition, artists consider buyer/seller feedback, self-monitoring devices and other ways that the site generates and cultivates internet “community”. *With eBay.com as the site, ebayaday* features a series of site-specific works. As a site, eBay has highly specialized categories, though their sheer number makes it tremendously inclusive. “eBay is a miniature model of the universe

⁵³ Rebekah Modrak, Aaron Ahuvia and Zackery Denfeld, *Ebayaday*, <http://www.ebayaday.com/rz.htm>

⁵⁴ *ibid*

with encyclopedic opportunities for context.”⁵⁵ While discovering an artist’s website is dependent upon links from other sites or chance encounters by those surfing the internet searching for artist authored content, eBay functions as a wide open territory of multiple audiences who are easily accessible. Every eBay browser who reads an *ebayaday* listing, whether he/she bids or not, sees part of the show. The lineage of broadly distributed artists’ projects – artist books, zines, Fluxus interventions, correspondence art.

Since eBay’s conception, artists have used the online auction as a means of reaching a broad audience and responding critically to the marketplace. Artists have used eBay listings to sell or inventory all their belongings, e.g. Trong Gia Nguyen, John Freyer ⁵⁶, and Michael Mandiberg.⁵⁷ Some others question the concepts of property and identity: Keith Obadike attempted to sell his “blackness” and Jeff Gates as we saw offered his socio-economic status, TV viewing habits and purchasing habits as marketing data to the highest bidder.

So far, most subversive forays into the online market are discrete attempts by solitary artists, often publicized as individual actions, ignoring the larger system of bidders, browsers and managers at play. Artists in *ebayaday* have chosen to contribute with the “diverse types of expression found in any marketplace”⁵⁸. Yashas Shetty becomes a street-corner musician on eBay by creating one-of-a-kind pop songs for sale. The initiators write on the website:

“With garish clip art & borders, banal snapshots and economical or descriptive use of language, eBay becomes a site for expression and poetry. While William Pope L. joins a simple image and short text to create a poem/riddle, Nick Tobier’s long essay exploits the unlimited space allowed for auction descriptions. It is no surprise that artists are interested in pushing the possibilities of the eBay aesthetic, but it will be interesting to see how prospective buyers react to an interruption in the usual flow they experience in scanning the eBay landscape.”

⁵⁵ Rebakah Modrak, Zackery Denfeld, Artists & The Online Marketplace: Making a Gesture and Sharing an Idea and Carrying out a Plan in 34 Categories, <http://www.ebayaday.com/rz.htm>

⁵⁶ John Freyer, <http://www.AllMyLifeForSale.com>

⁵⁷ Michael Mandiberg, <http://www.mandiberg.com>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

So ebayaday is some kind of a transactional art event using this new distribution channel where all sorts of artistic transactions are explored. A related approach for artists is actually to create market-places themselves. Before we turn to these art forms we want to introduce a few other forms of value creation.

An artwork offering itself on Ebay is Caleb Larson's "Tool to Deceive and Slaughter". "Combining Robert Morris' Box With the Sound of Its Own Making with Baudrillard's writing on the art auction this sculpture exists in eternal transactional flux. It is a physical sculpture that is perpetually attempting to auction itself on eBay."⁵⁹



Caleb Larson, A Tool to Deceive and Slaughter, 2009.

The new owner is required to put it online and it will sell itself off again, thereby creating a perpetual chain of transactions – if the buyers fulfill their commitments. Nothing is stated for the other cases. However, a witty installation and a new interpretation of the concept of the "autonomy of art"- by taking it literally and letting the work selling itself.

Marketing - Symbolic Values, Signs and Spectacles

The field of corporate communication has been extensively explored by artists. Corporate communication is the vehicle, to communicate with the outside world, mostly to potential the clients. Therefore enterprises offer some sort of visual interface and a sign language, serving the "corporate image". Advertising campaigns, a major part of corporate communication, are often a highly seductive combination of "brand values" addressing usually core cultural values (either localized or with a globally uniform marketing strategy). The corporate image is considered an asset, therefore a value, yet an intangible asset in accounting terms. However, as we will see, it can affect the overall value of the corporation easily and this is why especially in listed companies public scandals are heavily feared.

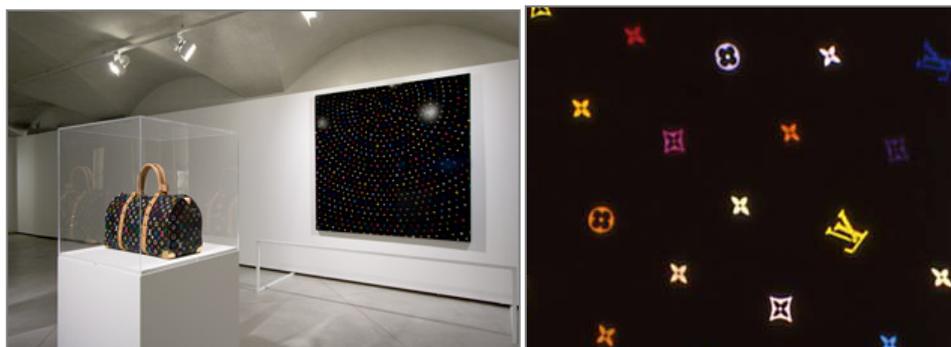
⁵⁹ Larsen, Caleb, <http://www.caleblarsen.com/projects/a-tool-to-deceive-and-slaughter/#2>

Corporate communication is a kind of value creation, especially in today's attention economy. Making people know a brand's name or think positively about an enterprise has a price, of course. However, corporate communication is not considered as part of the operational value chain within enterprises. As "intangible asset", it does not directly and in a measurable way add to the profit and loss of an entity, in other words, it is only indirectly related to the transactions.

Many artists used and modified existing corporate communication strategies and/or have created fictitious brands. In the field of "art and economy" this kind of art is probably the most common version. But, not surprisingly, only a few of those are actually transactional in terms of economic capital. We will introduce here some works, where despite the focus on corporate communications approach there is also a transactional component.

Superstar Damien Hirst who had opened in the 1990s a fashionable London restaurant called the Pharmacy, manages to sell for astronomical sums its furnishings fetched prices far in excess of expectations when they were auctioned at a huge profit by Sotheby's after the business went into decline. Again a case, where the overlay of the cultural capital exceeds that of its economic value, due to the assignment of a famous artist. However, this auction was not considered an artwork in itself.

Well known for his marketing of his "high and low" level art at the same time is Takashi Murakami. He offers a range of products targeting the budgets of all segments of his audience and offers low cost merchandised products such as key-rings etc. besides being one of the most expensive artists in the art-market. His enterprise called Kaikai Kiki (which means elegant and bizarre) producing and promoting a carefully designed range of objects – from large sculptures to stuffed animals and other merchandise merging Japanese and American pop culture, such as the Manga and Mickey Mouse, supplying not only the exclusive contemporary art market with high-prize original products, but also middle- and lower-income mass-markets through series of industrially produced items and accessories, which he sells in copyrighted stores.



Takashi Murakami, Monogram (Black), 2003

Murakami turned his name into a brand: “You cannot continue creating art without a sense of business or management”, says Murakami, thereby defining his vision of art in world which is totally economized. Damien Hirst applied a similar strategy and offers merchandising objects for low prices. These works are sold as artworks, just affordable originals. They usually do not have a transactional character themselves.

Sometimes established brands approach an artist for a collaboration. Tracy Emin has designed handbags for Longchamp and Marc Jacobs , creative mastermind of Louis Vuitton, has invited Takashi Murakami to collaborate in various ways. The results of these collaborations were successful in many contexts: the art world (e.g. various exhibitions featuring those Louis Vouitton Handbags), as corporate communications projects and as consumer products. They converse capital, though the transactions are not made transparent within the artwork. Murakami appropriates the Louis Vuitton logo as a metaphor of the object of desire, the industry of luxury goods increases the value its products through the work of the artist, who creates limited editions that in turn attain the fetish-like status of artworks. Of course the profits and losses of this deal are neither disclosed by artist or corporation.

The artist Res Ingold initiated his own airline, called *Ingold Airlines*. Ingold Airlines⁶⁰ is an example, where from the initially bold distribution of *as -if* branding advertising and merchandizing of an initially fictitious airline over years this superficition became a reality and finally even allowed to have a financed charter flight over Berlin. In his investigations how fictional situations have been introduced into contemporary art practices, Peter Hill argues, the initial “superfiction”⁶¹ becomes a reality. He uses the term ‘superfiction’ to distinguish visual

⁶⁰ <http://www.orbit.zkm.de/?q=node/388>

⁶¹ Peter Hill’s Museum of Contemporary Ideas, <http://www.superfictions.com/encyc/entries/ingold.html>,

fictions from their text-based counterparts in literary fiction. This apparent transformation from fiction to reality instantiates in the context of transactional art a transition from mere interaction to transaction.⁶²

Ingold's artwork creates economically and aesthetic value through the application of a marketing technique and successful self-branding and business practices, such as development of business plans, office merchandising, and promotional videos. Occasionally these activities were extended beyond law-abiding practices, such as "logos appearing on pirated trucks and planes".



Res Ingold, Ingold Airlines, from 1982 onwards

The in the beginning audaciously stated pretence-company, a mere object of cultural value, allows to offer economically benefits to its audience (real flights), through a kind of hidden sponsoring, so that finally a helicopter service can be offered to the documenta 1992 audience between Berlin and Kassel.

On his website the artist states⁶³:

⁶² Hill investigates how fictional situations have been introduced into contemporary art practices. He uses the term 'superfiction' to distinguish visual fictions from their text-based counterparts in literary fiction.

⁶³ Res Ingold <http://www.orbit.zkm.de/?q=node/388>

The airline Ingold Airlines was founded in 1982. Since then, it has continuously expanded, until it was converted into a stock corporation in 1996. The fictional enterprise with headquarters in Cologne orients itself strictly upon reality: its products, for example air passenger companions, VIP service, members' club, cargo system, and shuttle service, are reflected in a perfectly conceived Corporate Identity, which is presented in galleries, in actions, and at trade fairs. Ideas, rather than passengers, are the most important cargo.

The questions of the degree of reality and whether Ingold Airlines is art or business have not been clearly answered: reality turns out to be potentially simulated, and simulation has its effects on reality.

The documentation does not convey who actually covered the incurred costs. We assume it may be cultural funds and/or private sponsoring. Whoever this party may have been, she makes an economic investment on the basis of a cultural value, which is actually *about* the existence of an economic company. The hidden transaction of the sponsor is not thematised by the artist, who simply states, that through mere communication and marketing the airline became “real”. Through his persistent allegations the initial fictitious airline, though an objectified form of cultural capital, attracted economic capital and finally offers its services for free to the Documenta audience. The flight shuttle seem to have served only a certain in-group of people, Ingold calls them VIPs, in other word, those with the necessary social capital to have access to the inner circles around this project.

This form of value creation raises the issues of value through branding and the persistence to claim a brand, thereby creating what marketing calls “recognition value”. The mere fact, that people *know of* something, mostly a brand, generates already some economic value – and here some cultural capital as well.

An interesting example is also the project Ouest Lumiere by Yann Toma. He bought the rights of an energy company providing electricity for western Paris (therefore the name) which had been founded in 1903 and was nationalized 1946 after the WWII. Toma not only rediscovers the historic plant in 1991, but also “occupies” in the following years using it as a studio and location for various artistic projects. The occupancy becomes an appropriation in **1993** (correct!after discussion with artist)when he actually acquires the “rights of the name and

merged his own signature with the values' brand"⁶⁴. The artist does not reveal any details about this transaction, which also did not happen at the beginning of the project, but somewhere during the phase of occupation. It is not documented, what was the amount of the transaction and if own any of the property for example. However, with this "anchoring" of the project in the reality of a legal corporation, Toma pursues what Franz Liebl calls "a double strategy" and Rose Marie Barrientos "double life". Both refer to the simultaneous and complex coexistence of various forms of capital, such as the cultural capital as art projects perhaps with something we may call "metaphorical capital" of the energy-metaphor, the created brand value, the human capital etc. - all this in relation to the assets of an actually extinct, but re-animated and aestheticized power-plant.

However, in the following years Toma develops around Ouest Lumiere a whole set of marketing campaigns. Internally he creates a management hierarchy with himself as the President for life". The audience can apply to become a shareholder, and if so has the opportunity to join a vivid community around the project. Libl calls this approach "leadership hacking"⁶⁵, a kind of art, where similarly to cultural hacking, not the critical approach is central, but a playful innovation within the field of strategic management. Toma is a good example, as he actually creates a context of leadership and then implements completely new rules for leadership and organizational interactions within the Ouest Lumiere community. For example, the shareholders/investors/participants e.g. are also part of the organization and receive specially designed artistic titles. The overall mission of Ouest Lumiere is:

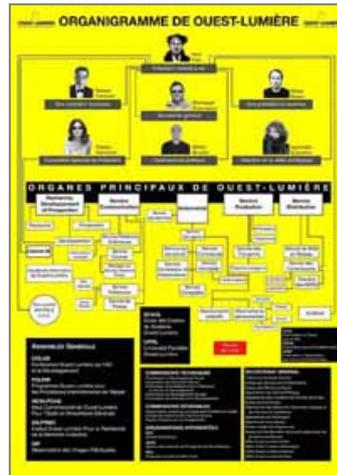
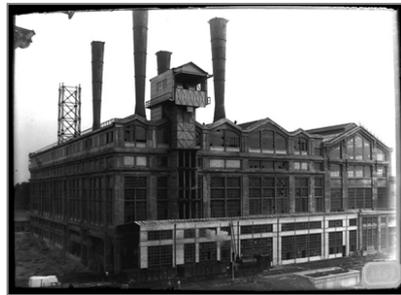
"Ouest-Lumiere produces and distributes energy throughout the world and beyond. It is in direct completion or in partnership with all existing energy producing and distributing companies."^{66 67}

⁶⁴ Barrientos, Rose Marie, The double life of Ouest-Lumière By <http://art-flux.univ-paris1.fr/spip.php?article231>

⁶⁵ Libl, Franz, *Leadership Hacking, Kuesntlerische Strategiesn im Management Context betrachtet. (Leadership Hacking : Artistic Strategies reflected in the Management Context)*, p59, Kunstforum 201, March-April 2010.

⁶⁶ Toma, Yann, *Les Entreprises Critiques, Critical Companies*, Cite du Design Editions, p. 337, 2008.

⁶⁷ Toma, Yann, presentation, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5ifr0_ouest-lumiere-yann-toma_creation



Yann Toma, Ouest Lumiere, since 1991

Ouest Lumiere offers various “products” – or just a witty reference to potential products, in the form of a package, without any content or even wall-paper and publications, paintings and photographs. Besides various installations on site, it also ventures out into emerging markets, e.g. with its advertising campaign in rural India.

The subscribers says the website “integrate the changing factors of today’s society and are themselves managers of symbolic capital of limitless assets.”⁶⁸ Ouest Lumiere not only plays with the metaphor of energy and extends it to all sorts of energies it seems, beyond electricity. Electric energy is conversed into artistic energy, for example. In this metaphorisation, one may discover an analogy to the notion of capital, which according to Georg Simmel is just a metaphor for energy and possibilities and which is according to Bourdieu subject to various forms of conversion.

⁶⁸Toma, Yann, *Les Entreprises Critiques, Critical Companies*, Cite du Design Editions, p. 337, 2008.

Value creation in the form of online businesses has been explored e.g. by the artist group “We-Make-Money-Not-Art”⁶⁹ By positioning “Google Ads” on their site they apply a common internet marketing technique and allow Google to display relevant contextual ads. The site is basically a portal for art-news and a blog. In case of a click and a transaction the owner of the website is rewarded with a small fee. So the artist capitalized his audience’s attention and one may argue converts aesthetic and cultural values into financial profit.

Collaboration, Commissioning and the Outsourcing

The economic principle of division of labor has become the artistic attitude for artists such as Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons and Mark Kostabi who outsource parts of the creative production. They thereby refer to an important characteristic of modern economies, the principle of division of labor. This principle has been subject of economic theories since Plato, David Hume elaborates on the “partition of employments” and Adam Smith described how a sequence of specialized subtasks increase productivity. Along with the specializations comes according to Marx the worker’s alienation and, they do not actually overlook the context of their doing and therefore suffer from the monotony leading “to spiritual and physical depression”. The principle was later in the era of mass production and so called Fordism again highly controversial. However, most transactional artworks simply share the labor of the production of the artwork. In these transactional art works a social agreement, or deal, is reached between the artist and some other party, which is usually not the audience.

Beyond the renaissance masters with their guilds and schools and in modern times it were the conceptualists, who divided strictly the instructions from the implementation of a work. Sol Le Witt, the protagonist of conceptual art “outsourced” the implementation of his artworks via verbal instructions and this feature was explicitly part of the art work.

We argue, that the conceptual artists introduced a new and “strategic” differentiation” by emphasizing the difference between concept and its implementation. “Concept” refers to the final goals to be achieved; “implementation “are the means, and may be delegated to others

⁶⁹ We-make-money-and-not-art http://www.we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/cat_ars_electronica.php

and/or subject to collaborative efforts. Joseph Kosuth makes this distinction very clear, when asking the “how?” and the “why?” of an artwork⁷⁰.

“Artists that (often in retrospect) appear to make quality art, or, better stated – artists that make valid work are artists with a clear or at least steady notion of the ‘why’ of their work. ‘Why’ is about art, ‘how’ is about presentation.”⁷¹”

We find these forms of creative briefing analogue to the innovation management leadership in corporations. Innovations are not only created in research and development departments, but are often initiated by a visionary management, with what we call “strategic creativity”, which documents itself in the description and setting of goals to be reached. John Kao⁷² for example, describes, how “crafting a challenge” is the subject of the management in the creative corporate process. Interesting enough, transactional artists use and/or imitate this approach.

Creative briefs and collaborations always raise the question, to what extent the artistic specification is detailed and how much freedom it leaves to others and their creativity. As we saw, some artists, such as Carey Peppermint are actually willing to share their creative rights with their collaborators.



Mappa by Alighiero e Boetti, 1978

Arte Povera artist Alighiero Boetti⁷³ commissioned 1978 a carpet to be woven by artisans in Afghanistan during his travels through the region. The vague specification of a sketch and a

⁷⁰ see also chapter on “strategic art” in this thesis

⁷¹ J. Kosuth, “*Unpublished Notes 1970*”, in: *Art in Theory 1900 - 2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Wiley-Blackwell; 2002.

⁷² John Kao, *Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business Creativity*, Collins 1997

⁷³ Jean-Christophe Ammann, *Alighiero e Boetti - 1965 - 1994.*, Edizione Mazzotta, 1996

selection of colors by the artist⁷⁴ left quiet some room for interpretation to the Afghan woman involved. It is not recorded, if and how much was paid for this two year production⁷⁵. In the current globalized internet-economy and the online off shoring practices this artwork could have been instantiated as an internet collaborative artwork of online-commissioning (see below).

A different form of collaboration is part of Santiago Serra's approach. He hires extras to instantiate his artworks. Here, work is not delegated, and employees are simply "used", often only their mere bodies for the implementation of his art.



Santiago Sierra, 8 Foot Line Tattooed on Six Re-numerated People, 1999

Serra, offers to pay drug addicts in their preferred drugs to perform his art by getting tattooed a line on their back. He thereby becomes an employer and – in Marx terms an exploiter. The employees or workforce has to trade in their body capital in order to achieve an apparent necessity (check Marxist jargon). Cultural Capital is created on the back of economically weak individuals, who do not even receive financial capital in return, but a currency which is even more unavoidable in their eyes, the drug they are addicted to. We consider this controversy work as transactional since there is an agreement or deal essential part of the work. Noteworthy, this deal does not take place between artist and audience, but between the artist and subcontractors. The audience, as witnesses of the outcome of the deal, is encouraged to debate the moral acceptability of this contract.

⁷⁴ As the title suggests the artists creates here already two personas of himself, Alighiero *and* Boetti, therefore he has introduced a kind of division of labor already in his understanding of authorship/creativity.

⁷⁵ UBS Art Collection <http://www.ubs.com/4/artcollection/the-collection/a-z/boetti-alighiero-e-22/mappa-del-mondo-85/description/index.html>

The Bulgarian artist Plamen Dejanoff⁷⁶, contracted a branding agency to improve his image. After a separation from his former girlfriend and moving from Vienna to Berlin he decided to get his image a new make-over and commissioned the French Designer M/M “invent a logo for his new card and some luxurious announcements including exterior and interior views of the building and the logo with the address.”⁷⁷ The artist briefs another creative agency to develop his public persona in the sense of corporate brand leadership. “For Dejanoff, the entire activity transforms the experience of being an artist into a kind of joint venture, common in the real economy”⁷⁸ writes the artist about himself.

Offering the service of a creativity consultant is the aim of Sigfried Ceballos and Brigitte Rambaud Atelier “Visuallylinguistic” since the late 1990ties. Here again we have a company, which is at the same time an art project with the aim to provide tools which enhance creativity. It is offering a partnership service, and conceptually develops projects and is a creativity advisor to anybody hiring them. Not just the artists as creative consultants, but facilitating creativity via its tools and thereby potentially multiply their impact. The tools, which are based on visual and conceptual techniques, are designed to “stimulate long-term innovation”⁷⁹.

According to the homepage, the client defines his strategic goals, the agency provides tools helping to realize those. So called tools are customized “graphic-semantic procedures” which are then applied together with the customer in workshops lasting at least one week.⁸⁰

The client defines his demand, project, intentions and expectations; portrays his or her work. This is made through e-mail or during a first encounter. The visuallylinguistic workshop presents then some pre-selected visuallylinguistic tools and the V-Construction. The final tools are selected and their modes of application are defined together with

⁷⁶ Plamen Dejanoff – As by an Invisible Hand,

http://www.nyartsmagazine.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1391&Itemid=689

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Quoted after Toma, Yann, Critical companies, p. 435, 2008.

⁸⁰ Atelier Visuallylinguistic, <http://www.visuallylinguistic.ch/eng/portrait/welcome.html>

the client. The results of the collaboration are presented and discussed in a final meeting.



Siegfried D. Ceballos & Brigitte Rambaud, Atelier Visualinguistic, (example of Tool for the organisaiton of a book),

since 1999

The border to an innovative consultancy offering workshops and an art project is very much blurring. Both forms of capital are created simultaneously, and again, only the perspective and the context may define, if we are looking at cultural capital or at a value creating agency offering like so many others, a unique methodology for enhancing creativity in and with an organization.

E-Commerce, Online Customization and Prosumers

In his influential “The Long Tail” Wired article from 2004⁸¹ Chris Anderson discusses the core internet business and defines it as a niche markets facilitator. Most of the turnover is created by matching niche demand and niche supply and the future successful online businesses will help match the two. Besides niche demand and niche supply is the user-generated content a core feature for future internet business models. Consumers become producers in the sense so called prosumers, that they may remix the original cultural products e.g. in the music scene and create new so called mash-ups, which then again can be consumed and prosumed by others.

So called remix culture is a widely spread phenomenon of cultural production in the internet today. User-generated content, user-driven innovation, “crowd sourcing” and “peer-to-peer financing” are related phenomena, in all of these the previously passive consumers are somehow actively contributing to a business model and the products/services. Not always are

⁸¹ Anderson, Chris, The Long Tail Issue 12.10 - October 2004,
<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>

they paid in financial terms or profit financially. Often is the motivation to be member of a community around a brand or a fan-club for example. Sometimes, as in peer to peer financing though the users create their own services of lending and borrowing.

Of course these new forms of interactions and transactions have also been picked up by internet artists. Online customization has not yet been extensively been explored, however some artist work into this direction. So offered Eva Grubinger⁸² – in her early work *Net Bikini* in the mid 1990ties – through her website the fabrication of do- it-yourself bikinis, which then could be assembled within the gallery on sewing machines. If wanted the visitor's could send back their creations and receive a label with the artist's name to tag it to the bikinis. Here the artist does claim brand-ownership and- one may argue tries to add value through remote branding. The user became a producer, if not to say the executing work-force, but not a collaborator in this work. However, the product could be taken by those, who did the manufacturing.



Eva Grubinger, Netbikini, 1997

A more collaborative approach has French artist Caroline Maby chosen. Under the “label mind art⁸³”, she offers her own oil paintings on a website and allows the audience to “transcend her paintings” With a special tool users can transform her art and then send the new images back to the artist who then offers to print them out for a price which is above the “pure production price” of the print. However, the artist seems not seriously focus on a transaction since she

⁸² http://www.evagrubinger.com/netzbikini/manual_eng.html

⁸³ Carolyn Maby, <http://www.mind-art.fr/>

does not state how she prices her artistic “added value” and therefore what the final “retail price” amounts to.



Caroline Maby, Mind Art, MyArtbecomesYours.com, since ca. 2005

The “Readymade belongs to Everyone” agency of Philippe Thomas was an early project from the late 1980ties where audience and artists are closely entrenched in a production of cultural capital. The agency offers its collectors “the possibility of investing into an artistic project, delivered “ready to go” as an oeuvre for which they become the sole author and which makes them join the big names in the catalogs and events calendars of the best museums.”⁸⁴ By acquiring a work and being willing to sign it, the collector becomes its author and, de facto, an agency member. Thomas experimented widely also with marketing and advertising strategies and transferred them into the context of the art world. However, his works tend not involve financial transactions.

PWC is the abbreviation of the 1st Public White Cube in the SF MOMA is an online collaboration/customization work combining the features of auction art. Visitors of the museum can observe an installation which is influenced by the internet audience via a surveillance camera.

⁸⁴ Quoted after Yann TOMA on Philippe Thomas, *Readymades belong to everyone*, in: Toma, Yann, Critical Companies, , 2008



Joachim Blank, Gerrit Gohlke and Karl Heinz Jeron, 2001 and 2008-9

The internet audience is able to influence the exhibition up to seven times during each of the two exhibition periods of six weeks. Via an online auction the internet audience can purchase the right to influence the exhibition by bidding in a total of up to seven Ebay auctions.

Starting out from the current exhibition situation, the winner of the auction will be permitted to add, remove or conceal objects, and to manipulate the space together with its artworks at his discretion. The only condition is that any work originally placed in the space by the exhibiting artist may not be removed completely. Otherwise, the shape and means of his “intervention” as the artists say remain entirely in the hands of the successful bidder. All the changes in the PWC 1st Public White Cube will be documented photographically and made accessible on the Internet within 48 hours.

This work is actually selling what in finances would be called a derivative or an option. An option is auctioned off and the users acquire the right for an interaction. One may assume that the later options, when the artwork reaches its “maturity” are more valuable than the initial ones, whose traces may easily be over written.

In the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of the work, the artists discuss the relationship between financial means and reception:

“Doesn't the procedure hamper the creativity of less well-off bidders? In our experience, the sum with which a bidder wins at auction varies a lot and depends on the number of bidders and their financial possibilities. Every auction begins with a minimum bid of only one dollar. The number of bidders and the frequency and speed of the bids in the closing phase of the auction also reflect the audience's attention span.

As with every auction on the art market, the participants in the strongest financial position will assert themselves in this process. The PWC 1st Public White Cube thus reflects the economic conventions of the art business as well. The project expressly avoids making the „creative competence“ of bidders into the measure of their right to alter the exhibition, but employs the unrestricted mechanisms of the market as a criterion for exercising influence on art and ideas.”⁸⁵

And there is an explicitly stated contractual element in this transactional art work: the users agree to the conditions when he decides to participate in the artwork.

“Conditions In placing your bid, you agree to certain conditions of installation at SFMOMA, as listed below. SFMOMA will endeavor to accommodate your proposal but cannot guarantee any installation which conflicts with these conditions. Certain materials are not permitted in SFMOMA’s galleries. These include: liquid of any kind, hazardous material....”⁸⁶

The artists offer the audience to acquire the option to collaborate. So financial capital facilitates the right of influence or power to participate in the creation of cultural capital, embodied, though as a processual artwork, however located in a highly recognized art institution, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. In this sense the work also overcomes an institutional barrier.⁸⁷ The artists did not make the link to financial derivatives and offered the audience to trade these options on a market themselves. This feature could easily be added and then also distributed via Ebay.

Another form of online commissioning is the work of Aaron Koblin, who posts a task on the internet and let’s the audience create a work, for which he actually pays. *The Sheep Market*⁸⁸ is a collection of 1000 sheep created by workers on Amazon Mechanical Turk. Each worker was paid 0.02 US\$ to “draw a sheep facing left”. The collection period took 40 days,

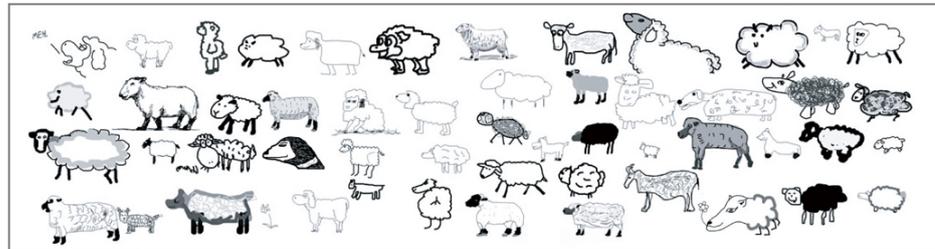
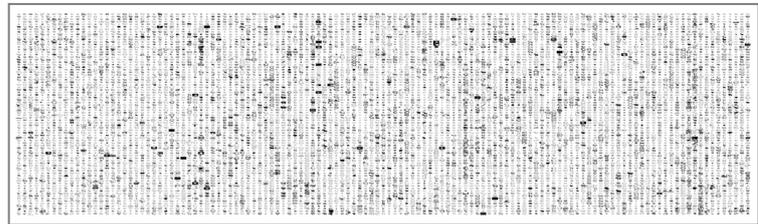
⁸⁵ Joachim Blank, Gerrit Gohlke and Karl Heinz Jeron, *Public White Cube*, <http://publicwhitecube.com>

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See chapter on social capital as product

⁸⁸ Aaron Koblin, *The Sheep Market*, <http://www.aaronkoblin.com/work/theshsheepmarket/>, 2008

the artist rejected more than 600 submissions and offers them as “lickable stamps” for 20\$ each to be ordered via the website.



Aaron Koblin, Sheep Market, 2008

In *Ten Thousand Cents*⁸⁹ Koblin and Kawashima let through the online workforce create a digital representation of a \$100 bill. Using a custom drawing tool, thousands of individuals painted a tiny part of the bill without knowledge of the overall task. Workers were paid one cent each via Amazon's “Mechanical Turk”⁹⁰ distributed labor tool. This work illustrates perhaps even more than the sheep market, the principle of Marx’s “alienated work” where the worker only overlooks an isolated sequence of the manufacturing process, so small, that his intelligence is not required and he becomes machine-like.



Aaron Koblin, Takashi Kawashima, Ten Thousand Cents, 2008

⁸⁹ Aaron Koblin, Takashi Kawashima, <http://www.tenthousandcents.com/top.html#project>, 2008

⁹⁰ The name mechanical turk dates back to a simulated chess player in the form of a robotic “turk”, which was actually directed a chess master hidden in the table below the turk. The expression is used for online marketplaces for simple tasks which appear to be executed by machinery, but are actually relying or requiring human intelligence.

The production cost (here “labor cost” of the workers, not including the work of the artists actually) cost to create the bill, the artwork being created, and the reproductions available for purchase (to charity) are all \$100. The work is presented as a video piece with all 10,000 parts being drawn simultaneously.

In the sheep market Koblin was making a massive profit (19.92 USD per Sheep x 10.000 is max 190.920 USD without considering other potential products coming out of the project). In the sheep project aesthetic value is accrued, the whole is more than the parts, the overall aesthetic value is probably higher than the sum of the individual parts (which as we saw he sells individually). In *The Thousand Cents* the artists decide to donate the generated money, an interesting move, possibly due to critique from the art scene after the reception of the sheep work. These works not only ask questions about the adequacy of compensation, and the mechanical turk online platforms do not require complex agreements or contracts, they simply allow requester and worker to meet online and exchange work (i.e. labor force, or any other activities, therefore time) for money.

Value-Systems and Mash-ups

As mentioned previously, the concept of a value chain is a sequence of procedures which create a product or service and basically add value in every step. The interconnected system of value chains management theoretician Michael Porter coins "value system." A value system includes the value chains of a firm's supplier (and their suppliers all the way back), the firm itself, the firm distribution channels, and the firm's buyers (and presumably extended to the buyers of their products, and so on).

Any business is basically a value chain, adding value in every step of the operation but value chains can also be created across various organizations. We will find examples of artworks, which create value in both ways. Some resembling manufacturing processes others, for example online value chains might be considered similar to so called *mash-ups*, a notion which originates from music practices and refers to the remix of sound tracks. A mash-up is a web page or application that combines data or functionality from two or more external sources to create a new service. An well known example of a mash-up is the use of cartographic data from Google Maps to add location information e.g. for real estate data, thereby creating a new and distinct Web service that was not originally provided by either source.



The Milk Project, 2005

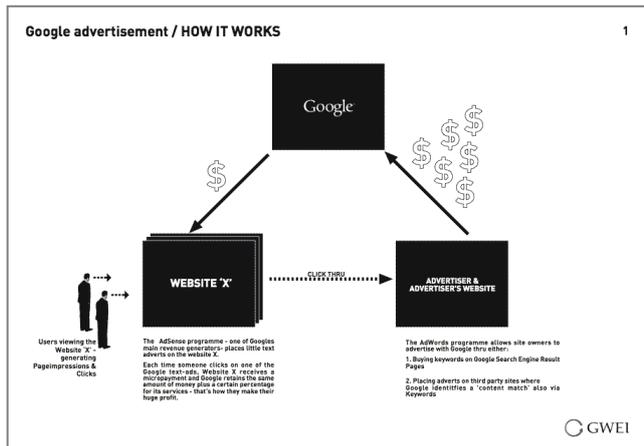
The mere documentation of a chain of transactions was the subject of a media art work, that won in 2005 the Golden Nica: “The Milk Project”⁹¹. The distribution path of the product milk which is soon processed into cheese is tracked from Latvia to it’s final consumers in the Netherlands. All participants of this supply chain were equipped with GPS technology. Though not transactional in nature this project generates a form of narration captured by locative media and showcasing the interdependencies in a globalized economy.

A virtual value chain including various organizations is created by the group Uebermorgen⁹². With “Google Will Eat It Self”⁹³ the group designed a value chain as a closed circuit of transactions: they first generated profits by manipulating the Google ad-sense program and used the generated funds to buy stocks of Google. The system relies on an illegal manipulation which actually generates financially viable values. But again, the artists deny themselves to take the profit and rather reinvest the generated funds. This work was soon taken down due to the legal objections of Google.

⁹¹ *The Milk Project, (2005)*, <http://milkproject.net>

⁹² Bernhard, H. Media Hacking Digitaler Aktionismus,
http://www.ubermorgen.com/publications/iem_cube_2005/CubeMediaHacking.htm

⁹³ GWEI, Google Will Eat Itself, http://gwei.org/pages/texts/media_hacking.html

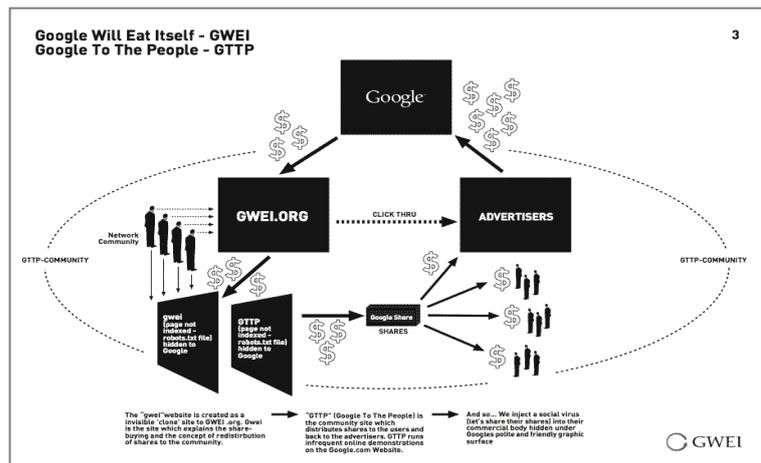


Uebermorgen, *Google will Eat It Self (GWEI) – Google Advertisement/How It Works, 2005*

The artists explain their concept via a flow chart, illustrating the circle of transactions:

“Users are viewing the Website “X”, generating page impressions and clicks. “Each time someone clicks on one of the Google text ads, Website X receives a micropayment and Google retains the same amount of money plus a certain percentage for its service, this is how they make their huge profits. “

“The Adwords” program allows site owners to advertise with Google through either: 1. Buying keywords on Google Search Engine Result Pages 2. Placing adverts on third party sites, where Google identifies a content match also via keywords. “



GWEI, Google Will Eat Itself, 2004-2005

“The GWEI website is created as an invisible “clone” website to GWEI.org. GWEI is the site which explains the share buying and the concept of redistribution of shares to the community. GTTP (Google to the People) is the community site which distributes

shares to users and back to the advertisers. GTTP runs infrequent online demonstrations on the Google website. And so we inject a social virus (let's share their shares) into their commercial body hidden under Google's polite and friendly, graphic surface".

This work is an interesting mash-up using an existing service of Google Ad; they manage to generate some economic value, though not exactly with legal means, and create a transactional "closed circuit" installation on the internet. The artists create economic capital through an illegal activity. This actually amounts to a violation of social consensus. Uebermorgen may argue that they compensate for this deliberate malicious "social virus" with the "Google to the People" initiative, a gesture of "redistribution of (the, here, illegitimate acquired) wealth. Plus, they could argue, they generate as an art or activist work some aesthetic value in the form of this witty demonstration of the mechanics of current internet advertising. However, as so often the artists do not provide a sound argumentation or any constructive alternatives to the social mechanism they criticize.

Another way of a business mesh-up and a new way of reflecting Intellectual Property licensing and the re-use of creative products is work by Philippe Parreno⁹⁴. He acquired the rights (for 500 Franc) of a digital Japanese manga character called *Annelee* from an animation company, revamps the design and then allows other artists to use it for their work, i.e. create artworks with it.

*"In 1999, the French artists Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno found her image in the catalogue of Kworks, a Japanese agency that develops manga figures for animated films, comic strips, advertising, and video games. The prices of these images depend on the complexity of their character traits. The copyright for this one, a nondescript, expendable, empty vessel ripe for exploitation was cheap: a mere \$428 for her digital file."*⁹⁵

Instead of advertising agencies or other commercial users Parreno offers this virtual character to other artists thereby creating, similarly to many other transactional artists, a kind of meta-

⁹⁴ http://www.stretcher.org/archives/r3_a/2003_02_10_r3_archive.php

⁹⁵ Souce/Stretcher org?

artwork. He facilitates the creativity of others, here by providing the cultural capital to create more cultural capital.



Philippe Parreno, Anywhere Out of the World, 2000

The manga character has its own personality inviting other artists to make use of her. Parreno considers this service of non-economic productivity as a form of liberation, as she is now freed from the market-place.

“My name is Anelee. I am a product, freed from the marketplace. I belong to who so ever is able to fill me with imaginary material”⁹⁶



Pierre Huyghe, Two Minutes Out of Your Time, 2000

In its three years of operation, the “Annlee industry” produced animated videos by Huyghe and Parreno as well as Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzales-Foerster, Francois Curlet, Melik Ohanian, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. Other artists and writers who participated in the project

⁹⁶ *Money*, p 159

include Joe Scanlan, Douglas Gordon, Sylvie Fleury, Molly Nesbitt, Catryn Davis, Angela Bulloch and the actress Catherine Deneuve⁹⁷.

Contracting

As we already observed many transactional artworks include some sort of deal. Often these deals are not explicitly made subject of the artwork, they are just a condition of its creation. In the following section we want to concentrate on artworks, where there is deliberately the offer and the agreement or some similar deal-like structure is part of the work.

A way to thematizes the unique value of art and the mechanism for pricing through very original deal-making was presented by Yves Klein in 1957: He exhibited several of his monochrome blue painting in various sizes and let the buyer define the price for each. The work was called “Cherche le Valeur de Tableau” and presented in the gallery Apollinaire. So every buyer would negotiate an individual deal. However, this transaction was not part of the paintings themselves, but more part of the event-character of the opening.

A quiet invocative deal was offered by the Singaporean concept art group *Artist Village* to their audience. They decided to pay the audience to collect their work. This experiment was part of the so called “Beauty Exhibition” in 2002⁹⁸.

“Sums above 1 \$\$ will be offered by the artists to encourage Singaporean to keep one of their creations. The objective of the exercise are twofold: firstly, Singaporeans who may never have considered collecting art before may now be spurred to do so on terms that they might be better able to appreciate, that of pecuniary benefit; secondly, Singaporeans who do collect art often have conservative or unadventurous tastes, and the reversal of monetary flow might enable them to consider art of merit which need not be pretty, decorative or inoffensive.”

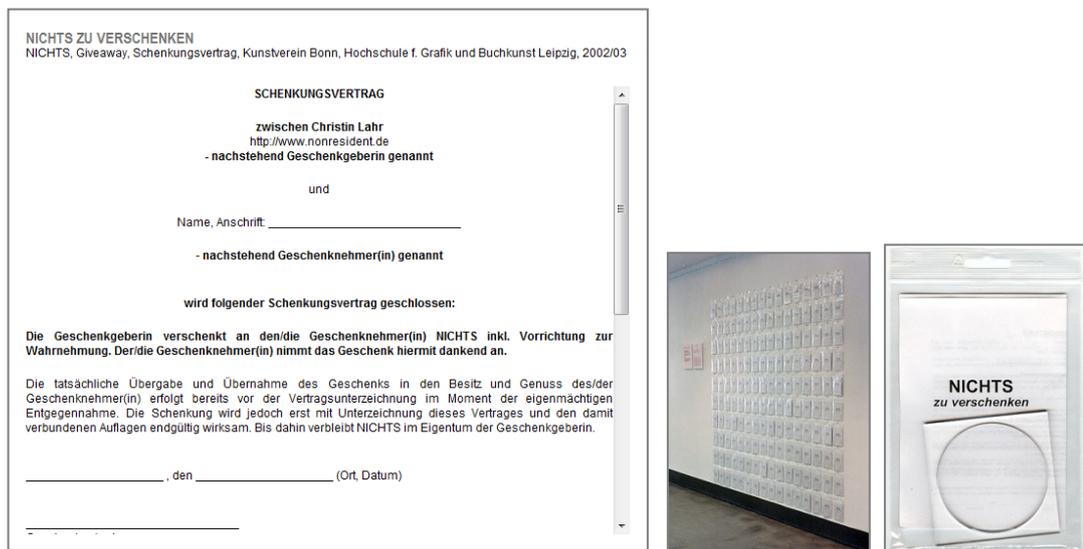
He the artists are actually willing to pay for the “education” of their audience and create perhaps successfully some future demand through initial sponsoring. The artist sponsors the acquisition of the cultural capital, which in his eyes, the audience is lacking. This meta-concept was part of the exhibition, but not featured as an artwork itself. Therefore it does not qualify as

⁹⁷ Link to catalogue, and http://www.stretcher.org/archives/r3_a/2003_02_10_r3_archive.php

⁹⁸ Artist’s Village, http://www.tav.org.sg/Archives_Chrono.htm

transactional art in the narrower sense, but since an activity of artists, could easily be turned into a transactional concept.

Very differently, Christin Lahr makes contracts as their explicit subject of works. In the German project “*Nichts Zu Verschenken*” (“*Nothing to Give Away*”)⁹⁹ she offers the audience to sign a gift contract about “Nothing”. This contract can later be sold like any artwork and a profit can be made. If the audience does not sign, they also have “Nothing”, but they do not have the right to benefit from the appreciation in value– the artist claims. The contracts are materialized as plastic foils with a cut out form, e.g. a circle¹⁰⁰. Lahr plays with the various meanings of the notion of “Nichts”, which is at the same time subject of an agreement between audience and artist. Again, it is a free gift and not a financial transaction that the artist engages the audience with.



Christin Lahr, Nichts zu Verschenken (Nothing to Give Away), 2002

In this work Lahr plays heavily with the conventions of contracts which is explicitly part of the art-work. The audience signs to accept the gift of nothing, which actually implies – as in

⁹⁹ Lahr, Christin, homepage, Project Nichts Zu Verschenken, 2002, <http://www.christin-lahr.de/d/projekte/projekte.html>

¹⁰⁰ According to a private correspondence with the artist.

legal terms – some obligations. For example stay the Intellectual property rights all with the artist and in case of selling the work, the artist the artist receives 5% of the price¹⁰¹.

Another example of the “Nichts-Series” is The project “Nichts zu Verlieren” (Nothing to Loose) where Lahr issued stocks of the value of zero, which are actually not allowed in the German Stock markets, but can be subject to Over the Counter (so called OTCs) deals, from individual to individual. The artist issues one hundred 100 stocks which have the material value of 100 EUR and “destroys” the capital by giving them the nominal value of zero each. The stocks she called “non-valeurs”.



Christin Lahr, Nothing to Loose (Nichts zu Verlieren), 2008

Part of the project is not only the performance and installation with someone offering the audience to sign, but texts defining the statutes of the *NULL-AG* (Zero Corporation). The company’s mission is to “understand nothing, value nothing, publish nothing, distribute nothing and not to create value”.¹⁰² Otherwise the description of the statutes follows the conventions of a German Corporation and has actually the form of a contract.

Christin Lahr is a transactional artist, who makes contracts part of the work. Playing with the meaning of the word nothing she refers to the economic and the cultural capital and the interpretations of her works, similar to other transactional pieces, like Duchamp, oscillate between the various meanings implied. With “nothing” she seems to refer to economic capital, however she always at the same time creates cultural capital, be it in the form of objects, installations or performances. The artists so far rejects any transactional participation on the art-market and has, “never sold a work”, despite the demand from various galleries. Her

¹⁰¹ See full version of the German contract in the Appendix

¹⁰² Christin Lahr, homepage, project “Nichts Zu Verlieren”,2008, <http://www.christin-lahr.de/d/projekte/projekte.html>

approach is to finance her living as an academic and use the artworks merely as a vehicle to convey her critical political views. As witty and complex as Lahr's works are, the message, and the addressees of her works is sometimes left relatively unspecified.

The deals she proposes are more absurd, than "constructive" or helping as we will see the various market-platforms which actually aim to facilitate and detect new opportunities, in whichever field. Lahr's work have a more Dadaist streak, a transactional play with the notion of values and capital. Differently than many other transactional artists she offers quiet a depth into economic and societal principles and applies for example contractual conventions in great detail.

Products around Social Capital

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, Orkut and MSN facilitate social capital and offered completely new ways to represent and even increase it. Also some transactional artworks create some sort of social capital as their product when they aim to overcome mechanisms of social exclusion. They facilitates someone, be it the audience or even some selected target group to gain some sort of social benefit, which it would not have access to without the art work. These works have often a political motivation and favor basis democratic political views tend to be against social selectionism and question and/or criticize social institutions and their mechanisms of gate keeping.

"Items for a better life" offers the Mexican art group "Mejor Vida". All sorts of subversive goods and services, such as fake subway tickets, student ID cards stamps "as well as printable barcode stickers supposed to lower prices" etc. can be ordered through this online shop. Mejor Vida is a non-profit organization and all articles are free. Therefore this online shop is another kind of art as give away, but in the form of a free shop. In the case of the special offers for financial bargains goods it offers a material advantage to the users/customers, though for the price that it is violating legal norms.

Some of the products challenge social mechanisms of exclusion and institutional barriers. The buyers may acquire social capital, i.e. value that emerges through relationships an individual has access to. A better life (Spanish: *mejor vida*) is offered in the form of social capital, when id cards are distributed and allow access to social circles, which otherwise require to overcome a process of social selection. The artwork offers access to social capital, which otherwise would not have been possible.



Meior Vida Corp, 2002

The artists do not really are in possession of these resources, which as we saw are also not easily transferrable. However, they provide access, disobeying the social norms and acquiring this capital themselves illegally. In legal terms the offer the artists make is not legal itself, as they actually do not own the rights on the products and services they offer.

A similar example, but in the institutional realm is the work of Cory Arcangel when she intervened in the Frieze Art Fair's selection process: Arcangel hid a golden ticket inside one of hundreds of chocolate bars which were sent to all the galleries who were unsuccessful in their application to this year's fair¹⁰³. Similarly to Meior Vida, the artist circumvents a mechanism of social exclusion, or selection mechanisms for membership to a an exclusive, social group, here the selected galleries, which qualified for the being part of the fair. Other than Meior Vida, who entered somehow a legally questionable realm.



Cory Arcangel, Golden Ticket, 2008.

Arcangel creates the value with authorization and in collaboration with the art fair. Since the galleries have to qualify, here the lucky gallery who draws the golden ticket, is allowed beyond the selection criteria and has a chance to proof their worth, as an before overlooked candidate.

¹⁰³Cory Arcangel, *Frieze Projects*, http://www.friezefoundation.org/commissions/detail/cory_arcangel/, 2008

This work questions not only mechanisms of social exclusion in general, but in particular again, the issues of valuation, evaluation of art.

A direct conversion of economic capital into symbolic and cultural capital can be seen in Caleb Larson's Donor Plaque (2009). He maps the amount of online donations to the size of a graphic of the donor's name, which is after a period of time printed as a brass plaquette in an exhibition.



Caleb Larson, Donor Plaquette, 2009

This wonderfully minimalistic work displays very effectively the mechanisms of the conversion of economic capital into social capital, at the same time potentially becoming a status symbol for donor and receiver alike.

Mathieu Laurette offered non-represented countries national participation in the exhibition in exchange for the country granting him citizenship at the Venice Biennale in 2001. Again an artist uses his own status to allow others to overcome some sort of social and economic barriers, but offers this as a deal, not as a pure donation. In this series he attempts to acquire as many nationalities as possible. Interesting enough for himself, he is asking his audience for donations as well as legal advice and practical support through donation boxes displayed in museums and exhibitions as well as through websites.

These works are examples, where social capital is created and given away, again somehow for free. A rather blunt attempt to convert social capital into economic capital is the initiative “sellyourfriends.com” on the social software site Facebook launched in September 2009. The idea is to buy and sell friends as so called pets, initial price is 1 USD for each, prices can increase, but not decrease, the more friends one owns, the better and the more one sells, the more economic profit is generated.

Though not an art work but a start-up is the non-profit organization The Whuffie Bank¹⁰⁴. This website builds a virtual currency called whuffie¹⁰⁵ based on reputation that can be redeemed for real and virtual products and services. Whuffie Bank apparently is based on the assumption of a mapping between one's reputation and wealth and is basically a barter system where the wealth of the participants is derived from their engagement in social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Systems of Transactions

We will introduce a last category for transactional art, which is not only artistically dealing with transactions themselves, but on a higher level facilitate any transactions. Most artists in this field have an intuitive and non-theoretical approach to the field, without detailed reference to the respective discourses, such as currency trading, financial systems and theories of markets. As with the artistic business-models, some of these artworks may be considered as potential innovations, others may just be conceptually interesting artworks, beyond any potential for a realistic implementation.

Conversions of Economic Capital - Blending Virtual and Real Economies

Referring to Bourriaud's "arenas of exchange" these kinds of transactional artworks link the virtual arena of an online game or a virtual world with the outside world, not only as a social entity, but to the economic system. Since both worlds have a form of economic capital, there may exist official conversion rates, which are actually quantifiable, similarly to the currency exchanges of the international Forex (foreign exchange) market.

However, creating counter-economies which are more or less entrenched with the real world is a strategy only few artists have the resources to do. The Dutch artist group Atelier van

¹⁰⁴*The Whuffie Bank - Reputation is Wealth*, <http://www.thewhuffiebank.org/>

¹⁰⁵ The term was coined by Cory Doctorow, a blogger and science fiction writer who used the term on his novel *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*. (2003, download under <http://craphound.com/down/download.php>) In this work, he refers to a reputation based currency under the name *Whuffie*. Later on, the expression was commonly used to refer to *social capital*, in the sense of a person's reputation or influence within a social network. The whuffie factor, introduced by Tara Hunt's book *The Whuffie Factor* (<http://www.thewhuffiefactor.com>, 2009) defines whuffies as a measurement for social capital and provides recommendations on how to improve the awareness of a brand or an individual by "doing good" unto others.

Lieshout¹⁰⁶ designed for their utopian state-like territory in Rotterdam a currency called AvLs, which are convertible at an exchange rate of 1:1 into beer.



Atelier van Lieshout, 100 AvL, 2003

Entrenched with the real world are also many economies which emerged around virtual worlds and multi user online games economies. For example, in the context of MMPORGs (Massively Multi Player Online Games) not only players and virtual artifacts can be traded, but also the off shoring of labor intense activities to low wage countries is facilitated¹⁰⁷.

In this category we could also subsume Boggs private currency approach. However, he is more bartering than inventing a new system of currencies.

Facilitating the Exchange of Values - Marketplaces

Alexander Galloway states that today's internet protocols are "synonymous with possibility" and that the internet facilitates the economic form of market places. Media art has always been the creation, design, structuring and control of possibility spaces (the set of choices offered by non-linear media) and artists have attempted to continuously expand these. One transactional artistic strategy is the creation of market places themselves. The artist may not participate in any transaction, but merely provide the platform for potential transactions. In that sense they may be considered as meta-artworks using transactional media.

¹⁰⁶ Atelier Van Lieshout, <http://www.ateliervanlieshout.com>

¹⁰⁷ Play Money, Julian Dibbell, 2006.



Rob Pruitt's fleamarket at the Frieze Art Fair 2000

Without the use of digital media and exhibiting a real marketplace was the project *Fleamarket* by Robert Pruitt at the Frieze Art Fair in 2000. “There are those who say that Frieze Art Fair isn't much more than a massive, posh yard-sale, so it seems no real surprise that Pruitt is taking that to its logical conclusion with this stand - though, says Pruitt, "it's not a punk-rock gesture"¹⁰⁸. Artists or just friends of the artist sell all sorts of objects artworks included, but also lipstick-consultation, T-Shirts, cookies, posters etc. Like the golden ticket, this work somehow undermines the selection process of an established art fair and the artists facilitates a platform for others to make some deals, and/or some money thereby having a chance to present themselves to the audience.

Without an artistic intention Robin Hanson¹⁰⁹ created “Idea Futures” a market platform to bet on opinions, mostly political issues. Users could actually “put their money where their mouth is” and according to the development of events win or lose. Hanson considered this online market a potential tool for collective decision making. The jury of the Prix Ars Electronica 1995 discovered him and rewarded him with the Golden Nica for Interactive Art. Under the name of “prediction markets” these kind of online poll systems have since then been researched in economic and political disciplines. Despite not being a critical media artist from his background, the rhetoric of Hanson is highly critical of the political system of decision making.

***The Idea:** Our policy-makers and media rely too much on the "expert" advice of a self-interested insider's club of pundits and big-shot academics. These pundits are rewarded too much for telling good stories, and for supporting each other, rather than for being "right". Instead, let us create betting markets on most controversial questions, and treat*

¹⁰⁸ Charlotte Higgins, *Fleamarket* at Frieze Art Fair? http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/authors/charlotte_higgins/

¹⁰⁹ Robin Hanson, *Idea Futures*, <http://hanson.gmu.edu/ideafutures.html>.

the current market odds as our best expert consensus. The real experts (maybe you), would then be rewarded for their contributions, while clueless pundits would learn to stay away. You should have a free-speech right to bet on political questions in policy markets, and we could even base a new form of government on idea futures.

One can subsidize a market on a question, offering extra rewards to those who bet right on this question. This subsidy is an "information prize", offered to those who first provide information on a question, in contrast to an "accomplishment prize", given to those who first accomplish some task. Instead of patronizing academic basic research via proposal peer-review, we should use prizes more.

As a trained economist Hanson draws two links to the field of financial derivatives, financial instruments who “bet” on the change in value of some “underlying” which could be a stock, commodity or anything else (in the case of “real options”). Hanson’s market place for futures is a marketplace for hypothesis, which over time will either be verified or falsified.

“All of our familiar financial instruments - stocks, insurance, commodity futures, options -- were once forbidden by anti-gambling laws. Laws could change to favor Idea Futures too.

Some credit derivatives pay out if agencies downgrade the credit rating of a company's debt. This shows that subjective judgments by established judges can be used to settle bets. “

Since the practical part of this work¹¹⁰ was inspired by Hanson’s view on derivatives we would like to quote him in detail:

Stocks and bonds are bets on big bundles of ideas: underlying technology, business strategy, marketing skill, prices of input factors, market demand, etc. You want to bet on just what you think you know about.

Derivatives are usually required to have prices predictable from the underlying instruments they derive from. Many believe that the right combination of existing

¹¹⁰ In particular, O-d-o.com

*instruments can reproduce any bet, so new instruments only lower transaction costs.
They're wrong.*

*Insurance companies can sell arbitrary bets, but only to those with an "insurable
interest".*

*Regulators only allow Commodity Futures where someone needs to insure against big
risks.*

*British bookies can take any bets, but insist on setting prices instead of being market-
makers. So they won't bet on stuff, like science, they don't understand.*

Hanson envisions a new form of political decision making and interesting enough his goals collided with the art arena's interest in the same subject, so that we was awarded in an arena, he had never heard before of¹¹¹.

A market platform for knowledge exchange without any financial transactions facilitates Hannah Hurtzig. Here, merely intellectual - or in Bourdieu's terms cultural - capital is exchanged, knowhow, which experts transfer to the audience, who can "book" an 30 minutes one-to-one dialogue with one of 50 experts. All conversations are archived and accessible after the event. The topics of the events vary, and cover issues like "Waste", Atmospheric Politics", "Mobility Pioneers" etc. Hurtzig draws explicitly the analogy to financial markets, but does not introduce any currency or metric for the values exchanged.



*Hannah Hurtzig - Blackmarket for useful Knowledge and Non Knowledge No 11, On
WASTE: The Disappearance and Comeback of Things & Values, 2008*

¹¹¹ According to a private conversation with the author.

On the project website she writes¹¹²:

“A Blackmarket is an interdisciplinary research on learning and un-learning, where narrative formats of knowledge transfer are tried out and presented. The installation imitates familiar places of knowledge exchange, like the archive or library reading room, and combines them with communication situations such as markets, stock exchanges, counseling or social service interviews.”

Expertise is exchanged for free and there is no information about the demand or supply for the interviews, nor a ranking according to the popularity of the involved knowledge providers. The artist seems to deliberately avoid the mechanisms of a real marketplace for the domain of science and debate. Perhaps she aims to protect these discourses from the apparent blunt forces of demand and supply and other mechanism defining value, as discussed above, despite referring to the notion of the marketplace in her title. Also, the more radical approach to apply market mechanisms to the domain of know-how and scientific enquiry may have certainly provoked, if not offended some of the participants. Possibly artist aims to defend the freedom of science as a domain, which Bourriaud coined similar to art- as outside of the system and the law of profits¹¹³.

Mathieu Laurette created a kind of barter platform with his copyrighted concept for a television show called “The Great Exchange”. He gave TV viewers in Bilbao a chance to buy objects in exchange for a car which he offered himself. The highest offer would be accepted, and then in turn be presented the following week for another exchange, and so on.



Matthieu Laurette, El gran trueque (The great exchange), 2000

¹¹² www.mobileacademy-berlin.com

¹¹³ See above chapter on relational aesthetics.

After a few months the series of swaps finished with a set of six blue glasses that remained unswapped. The show was produced in 2000 and broadcasted in the Spanish TV. This event literally explored the concept of exchange value and all the related implications – value for whom, for what. The artist allows the audience to witness an interesting deterioration of value through the chain of trades. Nicolas Bourriaud describes Laurette as "using society as a catalog of forms...he plays with economic forms as if they were the lines and colors of a painting."¹¹⁴

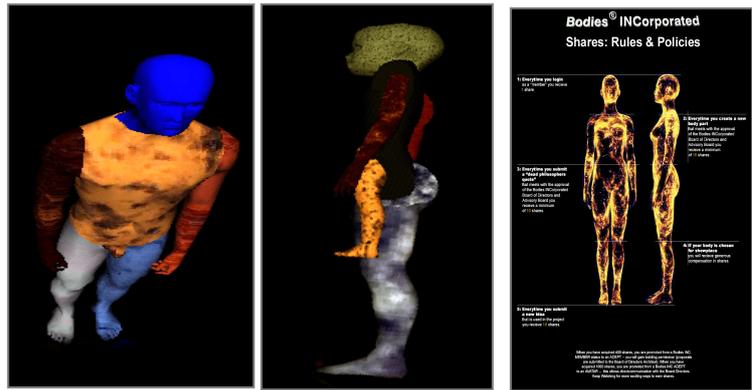
Victoria Vesna creates a market for body parts during her project “*Body Incorporated*”¹¹⁵. User can build virtual bodies out of virtual body parts (graphics) provided by the artist on the website. Participation allows entry into the “*larger body-owner community* where users can accumulate shares to perform a wider range of actions and to eventually choose how their bodies die. Vesna explains on her website:

“The value of the corporation consists of the virtual artistic results of this self-expression. Labor is self-directed. Labor in fact, almost entirely disappears. The corporation has no employees. Labor cannot be distinguished from artistic management. Management has metamorphosed as well. Managerial layers of control do not exist. The boundaries of the corporation are virtual and permeable. Anyone who wants to become a member can do so. The consumers of the product are also its producers. Shareholders are all consumers, and all consumers have shares. All this makes Corporation B open to the surrounding society. As an instrument of production, it is subject to its members' non-financial desires.”

Value, within the Body Incorporated system, is created via participation. Points gained for logging in, creating body parts, submitting quotes, when body is showcased and for submitting new ideas. These points may be used for “advance in corporate ladder” and to gain access to abilities.

¹¹⁴ Bourriaud, Nicolas; *Relational Aesthetics*, Les Presses Du Reel, 2002

¹¹⁵ Vesna, Victoria <http://www.bodiesinc.ucla.edu/> and <http://medienkunstnetz.de/works/bodies-incorporated/images/4/>



Victoria Vesna, Body Incorporated, 1995

Vesna has her own logic for her system. More shares are needed for non-ideal body parts. The tall, slim Euro-American ideal is more common and therefore inexpensive. The artist creates an utopian economy, governed by principles which she subscribes to and which may be contradiction the economic reality outside of her artistic realm.

Maurice Benayoun offers with *Last Life* a video game like market place to let one's lives compete with each other via real-time webcam streams. "If the others prefer your reality over their own, then you have won"¹¹⁶. And one "loses life time" if one spends the time watching the others instead of working on one's own life. In this game no economic capital is transacted, but it makes the proverbial relationship between time (to be precise life-time) and money visible and stresses the transactional character of attention in an attention economy.

In his *Emotional Stock Exchange* "3200 quotations for an emotion corresponding 3200 cities all over the world are displayed in real time"¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁶. <http://www.benayoun.com/projet.php?id=127>

¹¹⁷ Maurice Benayoun, home page <http://www.benayoun.com/projet.php?id=33>



Maurice Benayoun, Emotional Stock Exchange, World Emotional Mapping, since 2005

The art foundation *Mediamatic*¹¹⁸ hosts a matchmaking service facilitating, e.g. encounters with “Russian Brides”. This marketplace is meant as a contribution to the discourse around foreign workers in the Netherlands and a critical reflection of the respective immigration policies.



Mediamatic Russian Brides, 2008

Russian Brides integrates in Mediamatic’s general social software research:

Maybe you are looking for a muse, a flatmate, a one-night adventure or a sponsor? We developed a special dating machine for people in the Arts, Media and Design. It's safe, free and open for everyone. Get started today!

On the right, you see a random selection of dating profiles. Feel free to click around. The most effective way to search them is to make your own profile. The system will then automatically select the best matches for you!

¹¹⁸ Mediamatic, *Russian Bride*, www.mediamatic.net/russianbrides

Is it an art project? Yes. You're at Mediamatic.

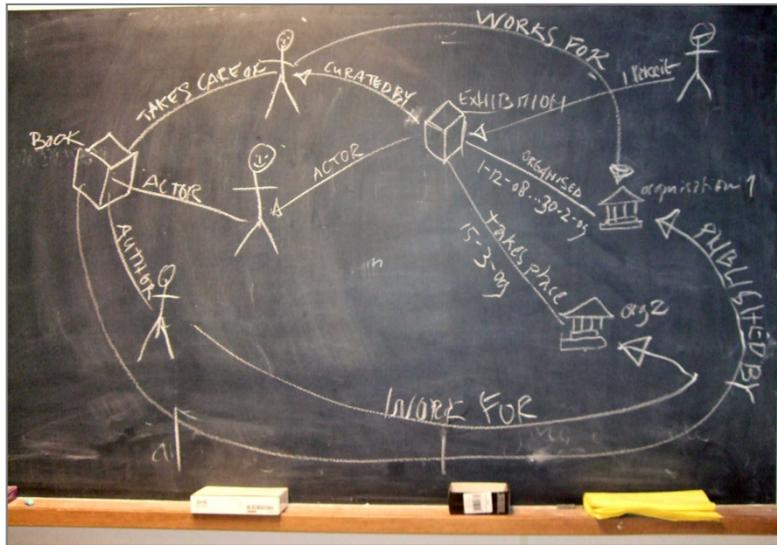
Is it real? Of course. You're at Mediamatic.

Is this dating project a waste of arts funding? We don't think so for 3 reasons. 1: The project is sponsored by Mediamatic Lab. That makes it affordable for a small organization like Mediamatic foundation. 2: The money and time we do spend on it is well spent because we seriously research and develop the social challenges of the arts and heritage sector with this project. Also the project is an art project in the sense that it forces the user to reconsider their perceptions and preconceptions of their contemporary surroundings. And actually, we feel it is innovative and beautiful too. 3: The project attracts visitors to our website that will also take notice of our other activities. It is effective cultural marketing.

Mediamatic explicitly states, that this match-making service is meant to be an art work, besides offering some serious use-values to its participants. The Dating Service is a market-platform for any needs, one may want to pursue. Utility and aesthetic values seem to coincide, a so far rather rare coincidence in the field of transactional arts.

In 2009 they launched a “Travelnetwork for creative professionals¹¹⁹” which allows hiring “guides” from the creative community when travelling to other cities. For 45 EUR a local guide can be hired for an 1 hour consultation and initiation into the local art and cultural scene. Willem Velthoven, the mastermind and initiator of Mediamatic draws the “business model”:

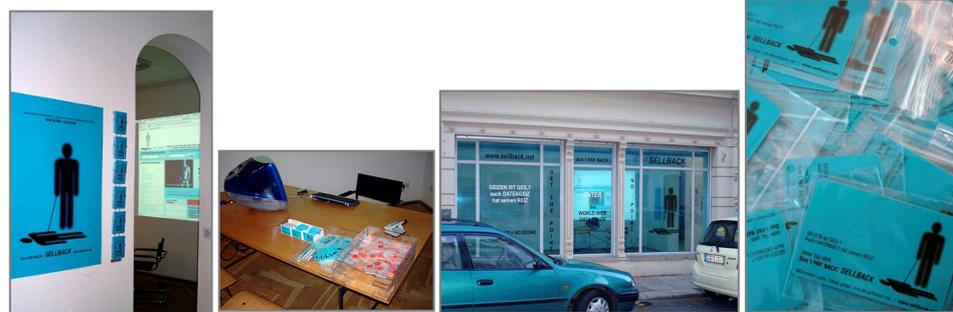
¹¹⁹ Mediamatic, *Travelnet*, <http://travel.mediamatic.net/>



Mediamatic, Travelnet, Drawing by Willem Velthoven, 2009

According to this drawing the service is a non-for-profit and purely connects travelers with guides from the cities.

Christin Lahr initiates a market for the exchange of personal data as a critical work on privacy issues in the internet. With *SellBack*¹²⁰ she allows the audience to evaluate their privacy data and then offer these data on her market platform. This idea is quiet similar to Jeff Gates attempt to auction off his personal data (see above).



Don't Pay Back, Sellback, Enter the World Wide Data Trade, Christin Lahr, 2006

Lahr creates, differently than Gates, a whole installation around her market place, called the “D-Trade” with advertizing and merchandizing products such as calendars, stickers, free postcards etc. The objectified cultural capital is only the marketing material and the online platform for this virtual market. These objects may cover and distract from the fact that this

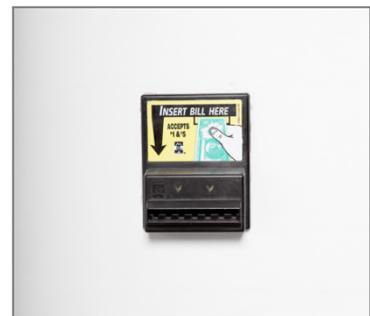
¹²⁰ Lahr, C, *Don't Pay Back - Sell Back*, <http://www.sellback.net>

platform most probably suffered heavily from a liquidity problem. However, its aesthetic value lies in its installation and the critical awareness it creates for issues of cyber privacy.

An interesting deal between collector and artist is crafted by Caleb Larson¹²¹, who declares the receipt of a transaction between the artist and the collector an artwork while he is practically making the collector covering his debt.

“In this transaction the collector assumes responsibility for the totality of the artist’s credit card debt as part of the studio practice. The debt is not sold, but the balance is transferred from the artist’s credit card account to that of the collector. The receipt remains, not as the work, but as the residue of the transaction.”

In another work, he installs a standard bill acceptor into a plain white wall and aims to accumulate the capital of 10.000 USD. Again a contract is at the core of the work.



Caleb Larsen, 10.000 \$ Sculpture (in Progress) 2009.

This artistic contract does not define though what will happen with the money raised, but communicates some other conditions of the artist and the audience, addressed as “collectors”.

“The contract stipulates that the money collected by the piece does is not to affect the market value of the work. Meaning, the money is to be considered a material of the piece, not capital. Also, since the work is meant to always be “in progress” once the work has collected the total \$10,000 the amount is to be split 50/50 between the artist

¹²¹ Larsen, Caleb, <https://mail.google.com/mail/?hl=en&shva=1#drafts/12b456f3dbaa236f>

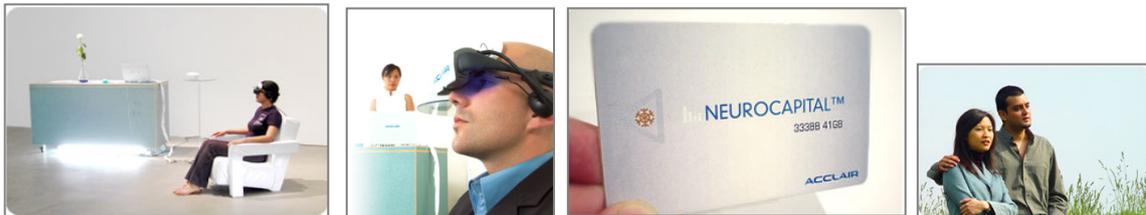
and collector. Like the avaricious Sisyphus, the work is reaching towards a goal, only to be returned its starting point upon reaching the goal."¹²²

This work illustrates perfectly transactional arts, as it defines per contract not only its own value and the forms of capital involved.

A new kind of deal is also the business model, which *Acclair*¹²³ is based on. Per video convey the artists how the clients of Acclair will be “neuro-scanned”, meaning their neurological preferences etc. will be extracted for a compensation.

“Brain Fingerprinting is a quick and painless research gathering tool that constructs consumer preference profiles based on person type (age, race, geographic location, buying and travel patterns, medical conditions, etc.). Analysis yields reports that are then sold to corporate clients.”

The brain-analysed users accumulate “neurocapital” which they can redeem in “financially valuable” other services. They may also be rewarded with a membership card which is similarly to other reward schemes (e.g. frequent flyer miles) classified according to some social status.



Luther Thie, Eyal Frid, Acclair, 2004

The whole process is called “neuromarketing”, and Acclair insists that this is not exposing micro messages to the users, but to scan their brains for consumer preferences. By allowing access to one’s cognitive apparatus, one accumulates “neurocapital”, a newly introduced currency which in order to indicate the conversion of perhaps mostly cultural capital determining the consumer’s preferences into economic capital. Since with the insight into the user’s brain and privacy comes total transparency along, one may also sigh up and become a

¹²²Larsen, Caleb, <http://www.caleblarsen.com/projects/10000-sculpture-in-progress/#0>

¹²³ Acclair, www.acclair.co.uk

“trusted citizen”. Users then can accumulate amnesty points, which in certain situations provide some legal protection. Again also accumulation of this form of capital can be redeemed for social status and/or financially viable benefits, for example for air travel. This work is all about the conversion of various forms of capital, thereby imaging loyalty programs with their derived and inverse accumulation of some sort of capital: the more we spend on a credit card, the more points we accumulate, encouraging us for more transactions in the primary currency. The art group here creates a business model around a fictitious way to a form of economic capital and compensates the users for giving out a fictitious form of capital, which can be converted into economic capital.

As a market place for the redistribution of cultural capital may be considered the community project “www.lkg.org”. Travelers through China can volunteer to transport educational material to remote areas. The platform helps to coordinate supply of volunteers and demand for educational material etc. The work, though not exactly produced with artistic intention was awarded at the Ars Electronica in 2005.

The project “Open-Clothes.com”¹²⁴ envisions a platform for all transactions and interactions around the design and distribution of customizable clothes and won also an Ars Electronica distinction award for communities in 2004.



Open-Clothes.com, 2001 onwards

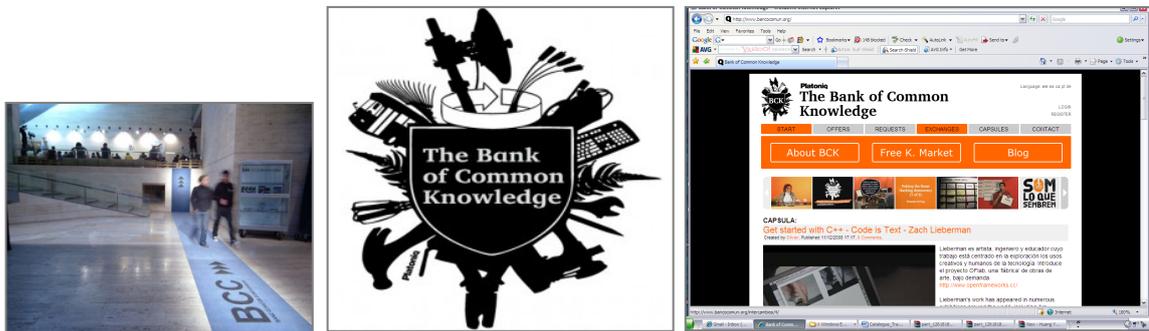
This project is another example of the relatively liberal attitude of the Ars Electronica Festival juries to acknowledge innovative works also beyond the media art-context in a narrow sense. An extract from the jury statement documents this view:

If empowered citizens are the basis of successful e-democracy, and empowered patients might influence the growth of e-medicine, empowered small entrepreneurs are those who can use digital communities as e-business centers that bring global resources to

¹²⁴ Open-Clothes - 6 billion ways of producing fashion for 6 billion people, <http://www.open-clothes.com>

individuals and help maintain cultural traditions, rather than drawing away resources and replacing traditions.¹²⁵

The *Bank of Common Knowledge*¹²⁶ is a Spanish based market platform for the exchange of any “common knowledge” in the form of video, text or audio files. Despite its name, it is not exactly a bank in the sense that it receives deposits and gives out loans, profiting from the spread between the two interest rates. Instead, the Bank of Common Knowledge is an open marketplace for anybody to share any kind of knowledge. The initiators are an activist/art group called *Platoniq* see themselves in the tradition of the creative commons movement.



Platoniq Bank of Common Knowledge, 2006

The project encourages the exchange of unusual knowledge and practices, therefore mostly what Bourdieu would call cultural capital and without any values attached. Due to their openness, Bank of Common Knowledge could actually facilitate the conversion of any form of capital into another one – as long as “others benefit” and/or it is useful and/or special. However, this would massively complicate the system and make it a trading platform with a currency, matchmaking and the need for a clearing house.

For these artistic markets the principles of web 2.0 internet economy seem to apply. As the ideal media to match niche demand and niche supply (according Chris Anderson’s Long Tail¹²⁷ assumption) these markets become niche products themselves, often defying their lack of liquidity. Collages of transactional modules may be meshed-up in this art form; they may be

¹²⁵ http://www.aec.at/en/archives/prix_archive/prixJuryStatement.asp?iProjectID=12809

¹²⁶ Platoniq, *Bank of Common Knowledge*, <http://www.bancocomun.org/Wiki/queEsBcc/>

¹²⁷ Anderson, C. (2006). *The Long Tail*, Random House Business Books

even considered online business models or even value chains of online businesses. The “Google Will Eat It Self” project already displays these features.

An actually functioning real time market running over years have the art group Derivart installed in the centre of Barcelona. Deviant Art founded Bar Bolsa, a pub in which the prices for alcoholic drinks fluctuate according to demand.



Bar La Bolsa, Barcelona, since 1997

With rising amount of orders for a certain brand of beer this brand’s price increases and the fluctuating values are displayed in real-time on screens, similar to a stock exchange. The artists label this artwork as finance art on Derivart from derivatives, thereby exploring “the intersection of art, technology and finance”.¹²⁸

Finance as Meta Business - Investing and Online Trading

Finance is considered the “brain of an economy” and as a service sector facilitates the allocation of capital and the mitigation of risks within a society (and/or the global economy). The mechanisms of risk and reward, investing and speculation have interested artists such as Duchamp, as we saw earlier. There are self-referential artworks, reflecting on the market-value of artworks, such as Sabine Gross displays the most valuable artists of the art market in a chart (“Wertsteigerung” *Increased Value*, 2005). However, here we investigate artworks, where the artist himself actively participates or reflects the mechanisms of the financial markets. This field seems to have a lot more potential than currently explored by artists.

Investing is a special economic activity, in a sense a meta-activity as it is the business to facilitate business. The individual activities of millions of investors and speculators on the global capital markets allow allocating resources in the form of capital (here of course

¹²⁸ Derivart, <http://www.derivart.info>

economic capital) and mitigating risk, as the speculators bet against those who want to hedge their risks.

An attempt to speculate with some cultural funds was undertaken by American artist Robert Morris in 1969¹²⁹. He proposed that the Whitney museum provide a small amount of money to invest in what he called blue “chip art” works which he was proposing to sell in Europe at higher prices and thereby profit the museum. This artwork has as subject the tension between the cultural and the economic value of these generally acknowledged artworks.

The museum’s trustees however resisted this idea and considered it as too risky. They made Morris to invest in “risk-free” assets, such as Treasury Bonds, which in the financial world are the benchmark for lowest/no risk. The artwork consists of the correspondence Morris and the trustees and discussed refers to notions of risk. Here the aim to invest is not genuinely part of the artwork, but emerges in the discussion, and the search for a risk free investment, that would be beneficial to the museum. It is not conveyed, what kind of investment was finally made and what the return was.

Relying on his expertise as a non-professional stock trader, artist Michael Goldberg¹³⁰ played the stock market for three weeks from a gallery generating charts and other forms of data visualization as output. He had built a form of “strategic interface” to the online market in the form of a tower. Goldberg had raised 50.000 AU\$ from befriended investors, traded without personal risk and closed with a 1000 AU\$ loss¹³¹.

¹²⁹ Katy Siegel, Paul Mattick, *Money*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2004, p 142.

¹³⁰ Michael Goldberg, *Intervention Art*, <http://www.michael-goldberg.com>,

¹³¹ Michael Goldberg, *catchingafallingknife.com*



Michael Goldberg, Catching a Falling Knife, 2002

Goldberg seems relatively secretive about his expertise, thereby potentially imitating the discreteness of the financial services industries and positioning himself as part of both, the artistic and the financial context. To have an opportunity to witness the value creation through the supposedly secretive know-how of day-trading is potentially the aesthetic gain for the gallery visitors. One may wonder for how long a really successful artist turned trader would actually want to remain in both universes, if material incentives would finally override his artistic activities.

There are several works, which use stock market data for all sorts of visualizations. In "*Parallel Mesmerization of Eleven Blondes and Eleven Brunettes by Two Computers*" Erwin Redl, maps the Dow Jones stock prices onto a group of blond and brunette dolls, which react to the movement of the stock by blinking and other signals during the Ars Electronica 1996. Toshio Iwai installs an interactive wall at the Tokyo stock exchange, allowing visitors to draw by gesticulation. Derivart, explicitly collaborating with a finance expert, created a sonification of stock market movements. However, these works do not actually have a transactional component as defined above and allow often only for simple interactions.

Conclusion and Outlook: Characteristics of Transactional Arts

Let's recall: from my early artistic practice, I had concluded that the introduction of the element of money could be a promising idea in order to pursue my artistic interests addressing the quest for ultimate goals and how to achieve them. I then looked at interaction and transactions, and came to the conclusion, that the exchange of value would be an interesting formula and that many artworks include such an aspect. I explored the notions of value and exchange in detail, but felt for the art context additional aspects need to be considered besides the economic value. In Bourdieu's approach to differentiate between various forms of capital I found a promising approach to differentiate between cultural, symbolic and social capital and relate them to economic capital. With analytical instruments I ventured out, to find examples in the art of the 20th century and contemporary (media) art and found surprisingly many which I documented in the previous section. Therefore, trying to introduce the term "transactional arts" as a label for these artworks seems actually justifiable to me.

Having this way selected a set of artworks, one may ask, what else do they have in common. I believe, the core concepts for the class of "transactional arts" are the exchange of value and the conversion of capital, but – they may come along with other phenomena and artistic strategies, which "transactional artists" are likely to apply. So I try to induce from the examples further insights. In the following section I will try to address these topics and characteristics, which of course do not form a list of necessary conditions for transactional arts, but rather are collection of observations.

One methodological comment: trying to introduce a label, is - in the best case - like trying to introduce what creativity researcher Mary Boden calls a "conceptual space".¹³² As a conceptual space she defines the dimensions as the organizing principles that unify and give structure to a given domain of thinking.¹³³ Creativity is the exploration and transformation of these conceptual spaces. Let's follow her in these assumptions and she then elaborates on

¹³² Boden, Margaret A. (1995) p. 2-3."Creativity and Unpredictability. *Stanford Education and Humanities Review*. 4(2). 1995; pp. 2-3:A generative system defines a certain range of possibilities... These structures are located in a conceptual space whose limits, contours, and pathways can be mapped, explored, and transformed in various ways... probably the crucial difference between Mozart and the rest of us is that his cognitive maps of musical space were very much richer, deeper, and more detailed than ours."

¹³³ Boden, Mary, *What is Creativity*, p. 20

various strategies to do so: for example, altering and negating various constraints of an existing conceptual space is a promising strategy¹³⁴ for various forms of creativity. However, the most advanced form of creativity is what she calls “transformative creativity” which is about introducing new conceptual spaces, by introducing new sets of rules and constraints dominating the space. Of course there is no strict boundary between transformative creativity and other forms of creativity within an existing conceptual space.

Speaking in Boden’s terminology I try to explore, if the introduction of the “transactional rule” could innovate the existing conceptual space at the intersection of “art-and business” and interactive art. Many phenomena which I subsume are familiar from other artforms in the 20th century. However, I feel there is perhaps an important new dimension added with the focus on transactions and conversion of capital, even though I may exclude many artworks in the existing domain of this conceptual space¹³⁵

By trying to state the characteristics of transactional arts these themselves can become in Boden’s sense subject to alteration, negation etc. leading to the evolution of the conceptual space of transactional arts. When having the characteristics bundled, we can discover the blanks, the blind spots, new opportunities, which otherwise would not have been so obvious. My own practical explorations and variations of the transactional art space I will then document in the last section of this thesis.

Superimposition of Concepts of Value and Conversion of Capital

The core concept of transactional arts, as we have started out to explore this labeling, are the two formulas: “exchange of values” and “conversion of capital”. I differentiated between the coexistence of values and the conversions, since I feel some works actually have this more dynamic aspect to change withing the work the form of capital. The two approaches may be considered complementary depending on the artwork to be discussed.

In many transactional art works various concepts of value coexist and superimpose within the artwork. There is a superimposition of the various notions of value and it is this coexistence

¹³⁴ Schoenberg, she says, dropped the constraint of tonality, e.g.

¹³⁵ But these could actually be integrated under an analysis of cultural capital in Bourdieu’s sense, since all artworks somehow create cultural capital. This sounds ad hoc inflationist, but perhaps a differentiated application of the concept of cultural capital in relation to transactional arts could reveal some insights. .

and tension between the meanings of value or capital, which often create the complexity and depth of transactional artworks. The wit of many pieces seems to resemble Sigmund Freud¹³⁶'s construction of humor, where as in a joke an “unexpected literal meaning” is suddenly revealed. Many jokes he claims are informed by a “double meaning” and “a kind of play...with multiple uses of (words)”. We observed this phenomena in works of Duchamp (Monte Carlo Bond), Etoy, Boggs etc. where the cultural value of the art work actually exceeds massively the nominal value stated in it.

The transactions in transactional art have a highly conceptual aspect. As we saw, transactional art works do not depend on successful transactions. The aesthetic success of a transactional artwork seems not to depend on the execution of a transaction. So, even in the cases of e.g. the unreplied auction art offers and illiquid markets – one may argue in favor of transactional art – the aesthetic and conceptual value of these works is not diminished. Like in conceptual art, it is the idea not the execution which is relevant. Yet, I would argue, experiencing transactional art actually has a quality which is different than just imagining it. Perhaps this difference could be more significant in an unimplemented transactional art piece in comparison to an unimplemented concept piece, because of the nature of the existential dimension of transactions, requiring the command over resources. Therefore there I would suspect that there is a higher degree of involvement in a piece of transactional art.

In the context of art discourse, the transactional component excludes many artworks in the field of art and economy. Yet, this criterion offers to focus on – what we find- an important quality and view on art. It allows us perhaps to think of an alternatives the dominant approaches in this field which I subsumed under the aspect of “marketing” in the previous chapter. They are mostly reflecting the sign character of economic issues, such as marketing-activities and the visible phenomena of our economic life.

We also saw an increasingly number of works making use of the internet and interactive media in a transactional way in order to transfer values. This is not surprising, since a transactional internet use is actually steeply increasing. E-Commerce, online collaboration, off-shoring, are only a few examples, how business is executed globally with the support of the internet. Outstanding are of course all the financial transactions and the financial markets, which, let's keep this in mind, are all executed via transactional marketplaces via interactive media (in this

¹³⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Subconscious*, Norton Library, New York, 1960. p36.

context called Information Technology systems). For example, the global foreign exchange market, the currently biggest global transactional system, is operating 24/7 and has a average daily turnover of \$3.98 trillion USD as of April 2007¹³⁷.

Creative Deal-Making and Strategic Creativity

The most important characteristic of transactional art which I observed in the examples is that the element of deal-making. I would like to claim that transactional art always has an element of a deal. Transactional art may involve various forms of transactions. We saw, there can be various constellations of deal-making in transactional arts. The deals can e.g. involve the artist, potentially enriching himself, the artist crafting deals with others than the audience and the artist making somehow a deal with the audience.

Some others deals are between any knowing/or unknowing market participants, sometimes the transaction is more in focus highly reflected and in others the transaction is just an peripheral aspect of the work. However, in order to have an exchange of value and or conversions of capital, there needs some sort of agreement between the parties involved. If transactional arts is about the exchange of values and the conversion of capital and if both occur – as in many artworks- between entities, such as individuals or organizations, then the question we often have a case of an agreement between these parties. This agreement may be implicit or explicit; however I choose to look at these as – deals.

A deal is what precedes normally a transaction. It is an expression for all the gives and takes and advantages and disadvantages, which are usually negotiated or just implicitly agreed between parties. In terms of relational art transactional arts is about the creation of relationships between people, and the relationships involve somewhere in the art piece a transaction. Many artists do not make these deals explicit which is perhaps a consequence of the l'art our l'art paradigm in classical aesthetics.

The proposed deals have to appeal to the value systems and rationality of the participants, even if they come from different social contexts. In all of these transactions, I want to argue is an element of self-interest somewhere. Deals are aligned with the over all goals of the involved parties and therefore relate to their motivations and/or rationality. Deals therefore address the

¹³⁷ Triennial Central Bank Survey (December 2007), Bank for International Settlements, <http://www.bis.org/publ/rpfx07t.pdf>.

rationality of the counterparty. This may be seen as a refreshing alternative to the well explored artistic strategies of the dysfunctional and absurd.

In modern societies when two parties negotiate a deal and reach an agreement, especially if involving larger amounts of capital, the agreements it captured within the legal system in the form of contracts. The core function of contracts is to organize the transfer of values; therefore it is not surprising that transactional artist actually reflect this kind of social agreement. Contracts prepare for the conclusion of the interaction – the transaction. There are artists, who actually make contracts part of their art form. In legal terms most transactional art works rely on weak and oral or even implied contracts.

Let us generalize this finding and ask what the potential of looking at art as a realm for the exploration of creative deal-making is. What could then be the benefits of transactional arts for society? Why does this art form seem to occur today increasingly often? Is this art-form relevant for the redefinition the relationship between art and society? And what is the potential for society as a whole?

I would like to propose that the core competence the transactional artists can offer is what I want to call for now “creative deal-making”. The artist has, more than anybody else the freedom to explore new forms of deals and social contracts in general. He may aim to reflect new deals, win- win situations. Promising field as a source of inspiration could be negotiation theories and social contract theories. He could inform himself from a literature of negotiations and overcoming the traps of traditional negotiation and deal-making.

Searching for so called win-win situations has been discussed in negotiation theories extensively and is still currently active field of research. Strategic management, merger and acquisition and political decision making, behavioral finance etc. are only a few domains, from which one could inform oneself as an artist. Since deals are captured in the form of contracts, the philosophical questions around the huge field of law could actually be a source of inspiration. In his experimental realm, theoretically there could be potential to reactivate and perhaps even fulfill the avantgardistic promise of the artists as the innovator of societal forms. At least this would be the most optimistic outcome I can imagine for transactional art. But to do so, artists would have to be equipped with the adequate know how. I will come back to this aspect in a moment.

On a technological basis the implications may be more overlookable. For example, for my own artistic works, I will propose a system (o-d-o) which I think may support creative deal-making. Generally speaking I think there is potential for research to ask, how media can help to find solutions serving any negotiating parties. How can we use the creativity which we artists are supposedly in command of to improve the deals and relationships which are established in society?

Related to the idea of creative deal-making is what I would like to call “strategic creativity”. In order to craft new deals, we need to envision overall goals and also systems of deal-making. If we want to contribute to the debates of social contracts as artists, we have to operate on the big picture and the overall goals of society. I would like to claim, that the creativity of society leaders and that of artists has more in common, than we may think. This of course could be subject to further interdisciplinary research involving organizational studies, psychology, creativity theories, strategic management and artistic practice.

Often transactional artists provide a meta-platform for others to post their offers and demands or even design incentive-structures. In this sense, transactional art leads to meta-art works enabling creations by others (and other artists). As we saw, the meta-art can be any kind of facilitating the creativity or art creation by others or just allow for transactions via a market platform. This is different than the artist himself creating new deals. If new media art is the design of possibility spaces, then these kinds of transactional systems are possibility spaces of a higher order since they facilitate creative deal-making and are not creative deals proposed by the artists themselves. Artists and innovators working with interactive media have been creating and designing systems structuring data. Transactional artists may design systems structuring data and these data may actually be deals.

With the exposure to transactional arts and related ideas, we train our skills to detect opportunities to converse values, to make creatively deals, which have never done before and envision new goals and strategies how to reach them. Art becomes opportunity detection. These skill sets may be valuable for various domains of society. To claim a simple transfer between the domains of art towards society, however would be naïve and neglect the elaborate discussions of the relationship between the two domains in general and for the field of “art and business” in particular. I come to the element of interdisciplinarity of transactional arts in a moment.

The idea that transactional artist may contribute to society through their skill of creative deal-making and strategic creativity will accompany us through the discussion of the next characteristics. These two findings are the underlying and potentially most important findings, which I can see in the field of transactional arts for now.

Disinterestedness and the Autonomy of Art

Perhaps one of the most provocative aspects of transactional arts is that they seem to violate two of the fundamental principles of western aesthetic: the requirements that in the aesthetic context self-interests are not affecting the aesthetic judgment and the idea, that art should be independent from other fields, especially from the economic sphere, and therefore be autonomous.

Historically the notion of disinterestedness was a characteristic required for the aesthetic judgement of the audience as introduced by Earl of Shaftesbury. Situated in the moral context he distinguishes the contemplation on beautiful things from the desire to possess them and points out a fundamental conflict between the two. Selfish and practical desires are therefore incompatible with the appreciation of art. This approach is a following a motivational approach interested and selfish motives are thought to undercut appreciation. Kant then requires any aesthetic judgment to be “disinterested.” and art should also not serve any external means; it is considered a means in itself. Therefore an art form which allows generating profits and is based on all sorts of incentives seems to contradict the postulates of this aesthetic tradition.

As we saw, many interactive artworks and certainly transactional arts involve aspects of intentionality, desire and will. Even the concept of interactivity in itself may be considered to be intrinsically based on some sort of intentionality. However this strict postulate of disinterestedness and the autonomy of art as demanded by Kant, Schopenhauer and others has been weakened over time within the aesthetic discourse. Nietzsche mocks strongly the disinterestedness as the “philosopher’s prudishness”. Pragmatists, such as Dewey rejected Kant’s approach and state that “artworks serve a variety of functions, such as entertainment, edification, religious inspiration, decoration, personal and social expression”.

Of course there is a plausible intuition behind the notion of disinterestedness as a prerequisite for aesthetic judgments. Dickie offers a fruitful analogy from the legal context: a judge can be disinterested and interested at the same time. “A juror might be very interested in the case being tried, that is attentive to and concerned about it and at the same time be disinterested

concerning the case, that is, impartial about the case and have no selfish motive connected to the case.”^{138,139,140}.

Now, exchanging values and self-interest are not exactly the same. Since we assume that transactional art involves some sort of rational deal-making somewhere therefore always an element of some self-interested activities. This assumption already violates the requirement of classic aesthetics of disinterestedness. One may argue, there could be a form of exchange of value, which is not linked to selfish motives. However, in transactional art, we do observe artworks, where the artists make a profit, even though he may later not use it for his personal economic benefit. But there are also artworks, where exactly this happens.

As we saw, this deal has not necessarily take place between the audience and the artwork/artist. The requirement of the aesthetic judgment only asks for a disinterestedness of the judge, meaning the recipient. So in this case, I believe there is always the potential of an aesthetic value which the recipient may experience and enjoy. Therefore even transactional art does not – theoretically - have to violate the prerequisites of being judged as “beautiful” in Kant’s sense. Similarly to conceptual art, the beauty of transactional art tends to lie in the inspirational value than in its’ implementation. For all other cases, the disinterestedness aspect is not required, and working with incentives within the artwork, is actually not a problem, for the criteria of classical aesthetics. This leads us to the next feature, incentives.

¹³⁸George Dickie, *Aesthetics - An Introduction*, Pegasus, Division of the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., New York, 1971. P. 33.

¹³⁹ So called attitude theories have extended the scope of disinterestedness to a kind of special kind of perception – *disinterested perception*, that constitutes the aesthetic experience. Dickie shows, that this argumentation has its weaknesses and that the various forms of disinterestedness are actually hard to define. It is not easy to prove in which cases attention can actually be disinterested. Of course, the *motives* for attention may differ, but perhaps there is only one kind of – cognitively speaking- attention, Dickie argues.

¹⁴⁰George Dickie, *Aesthetics - An Introduction*, Pegasus, Division of the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., We observed, that often, artists do not take a possible profit and give deliberately away financial gains. This may be part of the aesthetic heritage to 18th century aesthetics and the requirement of the disinterestedness of the aesthetic judgment. New York, 1971. P. 33.

Incentives and Rationality

Transactional arts are arts with incentives. The artistic material is the social sphere as we saw transactions are the very basic social interactions in any society. Working with incentives now allows artists, to influence the behavior of the audience (or others) and thereby influence the transgression of the possibility spaces.

Again this can occur between audience and artist, if it is a transaction involving these two parties. But it may also occur between the subcontractors, or any other involved party. Manipulating and influencing the choices an individual makes becomes much easier, if we can offer something, which is “in it” for living beings. Transactional arts explores thereby a *conditio humana* of living beings, as they have to somehow manage and optimize in one way or the other the resources for living. This may be independent from the assumptions on the degree of rationality of the the behaviors. Crafting a deal is designing with incentives.

As we said earlier the artists are in charge of offering and designing possibility spaces. Enriching non-linear media with an element of incentive, which can take the form of any capital, as we saw, give s the artist a new and powerful device in the hand. Designing possibility spaces with incentives lets us create an analogy to another important sphere of society: that of policy making: like governments they may use incentives to influence the behavior of others.

The question what motivates people best, what influences behavior etc. and choice, is a huge field of research, for example pursued in political science, economics and psychology and management, marketing and many other (business) disciplines. General consensus in most economic disciplines is today, that the simple assumption of the relational agent seems outdated and that not all choices are determined it. For example in finance is a new emerging field of behavioural finance studying exactly these psychological effects. One could make relations to various other disciplines, for example the tradition of rhetorics in aesthetics and or policy making and political sciences¹⁴¹.

Assuming the strong classical notion of the rationality of an agent, all these singular interactions may be *aligned* – and we borrow deliberately an expression from strategic management here - according to the overall goals and the strategies and tactics to achieve them.

¹⁴¹ Just to mention one interesting approach from the arena of policy making is the book by Sunstein¹⁴¹ on nudging the masses into their “best behavior” a widely discussed approach.

But even under weaker premises, deals are embedded into the existential stream of performing act during life. They are intertwined with some sort of pursuit of happiness, or any implicit or explicit form of intentionality of the strategizing entity. So even if we cannot clarify for now, if there is rationality as an underlying assumption for behavior and dealing with incentives, we can actually focus on the intersubjective agreements between people.

One comment for a technological opportunity which I spot in this context: looking at media works in particular form this angle highlights the fact of how much our current use of media support micromanagement, meaning an overemphasis of details and singular actions (like doing a phone call, writing an sms etc.). Most of our interactive systems today allow us to do single actions and interactions, but rarely provide us and support the big picture and the larger contexts of our lifes. I would like to make a point, that thinking more in strategic terms towards media would allow us to overcome this slightly myopic approach to interactions. As shown in my own artwork, I would like to call this approach something like strategic media, where strategic activities, such as definition of goals, collection of information, planning, decision making, implementation, feedback (see in order to extract a set of “strategic activities” we refer to Ingmar Brunken¹⁴²). Part of research on strategic media could be what I call *epic media*, aiming at supporting an overall and long-term view on life spans and support them with interactive media.

Aspectuality, Self-Empowerment and Legality

Since transactional arts are arts with incentives they involve somehow actual resources. We hereby mean, that the negotiation power, the resources people actually command become a factor for any artist, participant or recipient of transactional art. The social positioning of agents involved plays an important role in transactional art. Their actual negotiation power becomes a constituent of the artwork. Let us call this phenomenon for now “aspectuality”, meaning the relative positioning of the involved agents becomes an important factor.

A lot of transactional art works are working on overcoming this aspectuality. Artists reflect and overcome their own negotiation power in various ways, often with an audacious gesture of self-empowerment. The artist often creatively circumvents the limitations of his actual social position and lack of economic capital by claiming the possession or creation of fictitious

¹⁴² Ingmar P Brunken, Die Sechs Meister der Strategie (The Six Masters of Strategy), Econ Verlag, Berlin, 2005

values. The artists' implicitly or explicitly touch hereby on social climbing, the ambitions of the ever striving entrepreneur and par-venue and the artistic strategies may resemble attempts of fraud and con-artistry but also innovating and entrepreneurship. All sorts of only apparent or actually real value creation may occur.

A wonderful example for overcoming the aspectuality is Marcel Duchamp who dares to issue a bond, a financial instrument, which normally only large institutions or the government are entitled to issue. This kind of audacious gesture of an individual/the artist, questioning and overcoming the actual laws of the social space he is living in. By creating these kinds of deals someone (usually the artist) empowers himself and claims to operate in a possibility space which is extending, or even in opposition or at least violating to the legal system.

In other words the artwork becomes an illegal act and sometimes transactional art works even get sued for violating the existing rules of a society to, when for example constructing utopian and or illegal deals and/or offers. In most cases, though, the legal systems seem to ignore the illegal transgressions. The artworks are probably conceived as singular events not threatening the status quo, even if they have not only fictitious character, despite the actual fact of fraud. Interesting enough there are a few cases, where transactional arts have been exposed to the legal actions of a country, for example GEWI and Eoy's toywar for example.

With transactional arts we are, if we like it or not, drawn to our own existential dimensions: Possibility spaces may become painfully limited by the resources over which we command, thereby the limitations of our own lives. This existential dimension of transactional art could remind us of concepts like Heidegger's "Geworfenheit/Thrownness"¹⁴³ and the melancholia. Here lies perhaps the potential for the something like the sublime in transactional arts. The individual is drawn back into the insight of his own limited existence, beyond the infinity of possibility spaces. The melancholia as a symptom of the lower classes, musing about the limits to overcome their social positioning.¹⁴⁴¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962); re-translated by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996)

¹⁴⁴ See also Bourdieu, *La Distinction*

¹⁴⁵ see also Nicloas Sombart's "Sociological Novel" "Pariser Lehrjahre" ("Apprenticeship in Paris")¹⁴⁵

I believe aspectuality offers interesting opportunities for artistic practices. Since people can only in a limited way escape their social positioning, artists can target them and exclude them due to this fact. Like in marketing, they may target audiences deliberately (as target groups) and make this part a part of the artwork¹⁴⁶. Of course this has been done, but with the lens of transactional arts, one may rethink these artistic strategies.

For example, exclusivity can become a whole subject of art, the inclusion and exclusion and the desires, which exclusion is able to rise. I could imagine a whole branch of transactional art works around “exclusivity design”, which could pick up on the idea of Veblen goods, luxurious goods, whose demand would actually decrease, if their price would decrease. This relationship is violating the usually assumed demand and supply dependencies, where lowering prices lead to higher demand. This individualized targeting is a marketing strategy, which is easily supported by the nature of interactive media and the variability which they provide. Interactive media can cater to the aspectuality more than any media and e-commerce strategies are aggressively exploring this field.

Non-Fictitiousness and Interdisciplinarity

What I call here the aspectuality of transactional arts is a result of its entrenchment in real life and the -non fictitious nature. It is a common place, that art in the 20th centry has reached out to all domains of life and has overcome the boundaries of the various arenas. Of course claiming fictitious things for real and melting the border between what is real, what is art, what is working and what is the context – these are all well established artistic strategies.

About the the relationship between artistic fiction and life writes Jean-Marie Schaeffer.

“...l'importance des arts dans la vie des hommes depuis que les hommes existent, c'est justement le fait qu'il n'y a pas d'un côté la vie que nous menons et de l'autre les pratiques artistiques. Il existe un lien indissoluble entre les deux et ce lien tient notamment au fait que les pratiques artistiques tirent profit de ressources mentales qui, par ailleurs, ont aussi des fonctions non artistiques. Si on ne comprend pas cela, on ne

¹⁴⁶ See also Alinity Holding project in the practical part

comprend pas l'art ni la vie, on ne comprend pas pourquoi l'homme s'intéresse à l'art et pourquoi il a produit des arts.”¹⁴⁷

What he calls non-artistic functions become art themselves in transactional arts. Or one may say transactional arts tries to conquer domains of economic value creation, which are usually not considered art.

Peter Hills asks in his PhD¹⁴⁸ where he coins the term “superfictions” what happens if the illusion slips out of the frame and enters the other domains. He researches artistic practices bridging into “other domains” such as “business”¹⁴⁹ “media manipulation”¹⁵⁰, “veracity and propadanda”¹⁵¹, “narratology and new technologies.”¹⁵² This leads us to the next aspect of transactional art – the element of interdisciplinarity. These artists actually contribute not only in art, but in the the field of innovation.

The nature of transactional arts seems to be genuinely interdisciplinary. Artists have to “prove” their understanding of the other domain in the sense, that they are able to craft sensible deals. They bridge in Bourriauds sense the arenas. This art-form inherits some of the success criteria (even though reflected and therefore ultimately circumventing them) of the “other “discipline, here business”¹⁵³. So operating at the intersection of these two domains raises the question of the activities of the different roles involved. There has been a lot of discussion, that the artist may be compared to the entrepreneur.

¹⁴⁷ Shaeffer, Jean Marie, *Pour-quoi la Fiction?*, Edition Du Seuil, 1999, see also Alexandre Prstojevi, *Entretien avec Jean-Marie Schaeffe* <http://www.vox-poetica.org/entretiens/schaeffer.htm>

¹⁴⁸ Exegesis, *SuperFictions*, <http://www.superfictions.com/phd/SuperFictionPhD.pdf> (which year)

¹⁴⁹ (Res Ingold, Banco di Oklahoma),

¹⁵⁰ (The Leeds, Damp, Stephen Hurrell)

¹⁵¹ (Ilya Kabakoff, Cantet Cardiff),

¹⁵² (Alexa Wright, Stephen Hurrell).

¹⁵³ An impressive example though not from the field of transactional arts, but from sculptures are Theo Jansen’s Beach Beasts, which qualify as engineering masterpieces as well as outstanding kinetic sculptures in the art context.

The idea, that the artist becomes an entrepreneur has been widely entertained in the recent discussion in art and business. In terms of finding ways of value creations, artists actually seem to adapt and implement similar strategies than entrepreneurs. The parallelism between the entrepreneur and the artist i.e. the idea of the avant-garde seems quiet intuitive.

Both, artist and entrepreneur are primarily risk takers, they venture out for new models of creation and questioning the status quo¹⁵⁴. Both tend to bet their own security on this venture, often both are not driven by the outside world, yet the entrepreneur of course is more inclined to serve a market and the demand, whereas artists are supposedly – at least if operating within the paradigm of l’art pour l’art not openly taking the valuation of critiques, gatekeepers, collectors etc. and art consumer into account. An artist may also be inclined to think in metaphors have an aesthetic motivation, what ever this exactly means, to his doings. Entrepreneurs¹⁵⁵ tend to be driven by the idea to make profit, and do lack the level of aesthetisation of their doings. However, from an abstract perspective it is an interesting analogy. They both are not living within the constraints of an employee; do not suffer from the alienation of work and the division of work and life. This may be the most important criteria, even if in detail motivations, actions and view on the world may differ very drastically.

In his book, *Le artiste en travailleur*, Pierre Michel Menger¹⁵⁶ points out, that both live in highly volatile environments, both have to quickly adopt to new opportunities and collaborate in whatever constellation the opportunities for new value chains require. The artist becomes a model for the surviving strategies in capitalism. . Often transactionl art operates in both domains and therefore qualifies as what Stephen Wriyth calls a “double strategy” or “double ontological status” of the artistic enterprise.¹⁵⁷ Stephane Sauzedde asks, if and if so, what kind of artistic critique the artistic entrepreneur is actually capable of. Are artist entrepreneurs truly subversive, he asks? I would like to reply: “Do they have to”? What do we mean by critique, what do we mean by subversive? And isn’t the established arsenal of subversive artistic

¹⁵⁴ Daniela Plewe, *Marketing for Entrepreneurs and Artists* – Contribution to the Course Material for the School for Advanced Education, .Basel, 2005

¹⁵⁵ Faltin, *Entrepreneurship*

¹⁵⁶ Pierre Michel Menger, *Portrait de l’artiste en travailleur, la republique des idees seul*, 2002

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Wriyth, In: Yann Toma...Companies...

strategies somehow explored and could be enriched by for example some (even economic) value-creating approaches?

The entrepreneur is only one protagonist in the field of business. Inspired by our view on strategic creativity, I would like to suggest for future research the investigation of the analogy between artist and other protagonists of contemporary capitalism, since e.g. investors, company founders, senior management roles and anybody operating on the highest strategic levels could be also fruitful subjects. I personally would start with the role of organisations like venture capital, business angels and investment-banks specializing mergers and acquisitions they operate on the highest levels of capital allocation.

Let's recall that transactional art practices should not be confused with artists applying economic principles to their art-production or art-marketing. There are artists who manage to be highly admired for their optimization of the art-production, e.g. Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, and Damien Hirst who apply the division of labor to the art production. However, if we consider these activities as production-innovations they do not seem to be transferred to other industries on a large scale. It rather seems that artists benefitted from the economic know-how and applied it for their own benefit.

The interdisciplinarity of transactional arts may be viewed as a kind of operational decontextualisation and “détournement”, in which existing value creating practices are situated in the aesthetic realm. And, as we saw, they can also be situated, nearly invisible outside of the aesthetic domain.

Innovation is considered a form of value creation. So how does transactional art and innovation relate to each other? We have seen many examples of art-works, which apply economic principles. And thereby generate value. So there seems enough inspiration for art in the domain of business. But what about the other direction, do artists inspire business practices? Shouldn't truly interdisciplinary work be also measured by the standards and expectations of the other domains? So can transactional arts actually make a contribution to the field of business?

If art is considered the realm of society for experiments and innovations, do transactional art works actually inform the other discipline, here business and economics in a constructive way according to *their* success criteria? We argue: they actually *could*. As previously mentioned, I believe that artistic and business creativity have a lot more in common, than it is usually

assumed. Both involve strategizing, i.e. the envisioning of goals to be pursued and the location and creation of new opportunities, in other word strategic creativity.

But the moment an artist turns into a successful entrepreneur and has apparently the business know-how, he perhaps would disappear from the perception of the art world. Depending on this social background, he may find it appealing to be capable to afford a lifestyle he may have never been able to access before. He may be tempted to pursue happiness solely in the economic domain¹⁵⁸. On the other side, there are economically independent individuals who turn towards practicing art may do so in deliberate negligence of business knowhow and define their challenges in the realms of cultural achievements.

Artistic strategies of value-creation via innovation have recently been discussed und the label “cultural hacking”, where artists actually contribute to the other domains and- as I would say, meet somehow the criteria of this other domain¹⁵⁹. Cultural hackers as Duello and Liebl following de Certeau’s in his” *L’Invention du Quotidien* ¹⁶⁰ . understand them, are artists penetrating into new arenas, adopting strategies from these domains and actually implement them. They may operate as designers, managers activists and scientists. Their strategic approaches include placebo-products, brand communication, terroristic appropriations, “coolness competence”, deconceptual coding, “hystery based market segmentations” to name a few. Artists include Chicks and Speed, Dunne & Rabi, Human Beans and others. Yann Toma’s work *Ouest Lumiere* was subsumed as the variation of cultural hacking, socalled “leadership hacking” as Franz Liebl writes in the *Kunstforum* 2010. This is a very promising approach, which actually addresses the strategic creativity element.

So where are some art-inspired business models in the economic domain? Why haven’t we heard of them? Are artists not good business people and actually incapable of generating tru innovations in this field? Perhaps yes, because most artist may not truly be familiar with economic and business principles. Maybe because many artists are actually dilettants and do not have the in depth understanding of the conceptual space of economics, in order to come up with rule-chaning and signifivant creativity. As Mary Boden has pointed out, in order to be

¹⁵⁸ This happened a lot during the dot.com bubble.

¹⁵⁹ T. Duello, Liebl, F, *Cultural Hacking*, - *Kunst des Strategischen Handelns*, 2004.

¹⁶⁰ Michel de Certeau, *L’Invention du Quotidien*. Vol. 1, *Arts de Faire*, Paris 1980

able to make a creative contribution or even rule-changing transformative creations, one has to have a solid understanding of the domain, and there is not something like universally creative skills, which can be applied domain independently. If this is correct, it would imply that transactional artists have to acquire economic knowledge in depth. This should not be anything new to artists today and also not to media artists, which as we have seen over the last 40-50 years have embraced other disciplines, such as technology, robotics, biotech, nanotech etc. Under transactional arts we could subsume in future those attempts, which have bothered to digest economic principles in an artistic way. A specially promising is the domain of finance, and I will make this point in a moment. But since art works are finally evaluated by aesthetic standards, the ultimate measure for transactional art is still the aesthetic value they create. Let us first continue, with the question, how and if so, this kind of art can be viewed as art.

Deals as Art

So in which sense can transactional arts be art? As already discussed, I tried to locate them somewhere in the traditions of conceptual art, somehow as a kind of relational art, creating new relations between parties and bridging interstices and as a kind of innovative cultural hacking, since the innovations do actually qualify in the arenas outside of the art context only. I would like to offer an additional argument, which starts with the format of the deal. I would like to try to look at deals as experiences and then as forms narrations.

Can the deal making in transactional arts be viewed as experiences in the sense of Dewey aesthetics? If transactions are ubiquitous experiences of every day life, how can they become subject of art works and escape their daily life triviality? John Dewey claims that things are experienced, but not in such a way, that they are compounded into *an* experience.¹⁶¹ One may add: *normally*, when they are not experienced with an aesthetic attitude, though Dewey does not use this expression. For him, any event only qualifies as *an* experience if something experienced runs its “course of fulfillment”, i.e. does come to some sort of completion. And Works of art are important examples of *an* experience. Transactions are relatively finite activities, some parties exchange some sort of value and if both sides have received the values, the transaction is considered to be completed. So they seem to qualify easily for this condition.

¹⁶¹ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Putnam Publishing Group, Original 1934, reprinted by publisher, p.35ff.

But what is the significance of an artwork as an experience? How can transactional artworks be an experience?¹⁶², .¹⁶³

In transactional arts, transactions by nature finite interactions may become the subject of the art work itself, either by involving the audience in it, or making the audience observe one in one or the other form. In many cases the transactional artwork are voyeuristic and conceptual: the audience often become witnesses of transactions. They can often be perceived without transacting and then resemble conceptual art, with a pure delight of imagining a deal. Like watching a hero undergoing the dramaturgic challenges in a classical narration or drama, it may be a pleasure – or at least of interest to the audience - to watch a deal happening.

Art as experiences, perhaps even experiences *about* experiences, may be viewed as experiences of a second order, allowing the observation of experiences under risk-free conditions. This reminds us of a different context: in narrations one can experience strategies of life in a risk-free setting. Deals seal and conclude the experience of a process between the agents. Witnessing deals in the form of transactional artworks, allows the audience the risk free participation in the practices of deal making. Similarly to a narration, the audience does not have to invest and risk what the protagonists do. In some transactional art works, they do, in others the audience is just witnessing the parties in their deal-making This characteristic perhaps explains the dominance of the form of narration as one of the most persistent and popular form of “knowledge representation” throughout cultural history.

Following this assumption, I would like to propose to view contracts as a form of condensed narration. As the finalization of a deal-making process and highly dense format, they may be viewed as a even form of - poetry. Any deal-making process is a kind of negotiation between parties, pursuing somehow their goals, and intentions, strategies tactics, no matter how explicit or implicitly known to the party. All transactions are somehow embedded in an agent’s pursuit

¹⁶² “In an artwork, different acts, episodes, occurrences melt and fuse into unity, and yet do not disappear and loose their own character as they do so – just as in a genial conversation there is a continuous interchange and blending, and yet each speaker not only retains his own character but manifests it more clearly than is his wont.”
In: John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Putnam Publishing Group, Original 1934, reprinted by publisher, p.35ff.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 36

of happiness, one may argue. They are ubiquitous interaction in daily life between humans, if not a *conditio humana*.

In the context of the previously mentioned approach to strategic epic media, contracts may be viewed as interesting forms of a kind of knowledge condensation, in order to compress negotiations between parties.

Knowledge of Power

We came across many transactional artworks, which radically critique capitalism. Even though applying their mechanisms, and e.g. financing methods, they are deeply rooted in an anticapitalistic rhetoric, if not to say a kind of dogmatism derived from the 1968 student movement. Unfortunately this dogmatic discourse has also dominated the new media art scene of the last 20 -30 years. I am here not defending any political position – all I want to state is that the discourse in the media arts lacks heterogeneity of political views and seems endangered to be dogmatic.

Can artistic critique, questioning and proposing change the world? The good news is: apparently yes. Boltanski and Chiappello describe in their book the “*Nouvel Esprit du Capitalism*”, how something that they call artistic critique has influenced and changed the management style. The values of the so called artistic critique have over 20-30 years altered capitalism, they argue. They explain the change in management approaches to this intellectual critique.

The values of the artistic critique are anti oppression (market domination, factory discipline), the massification of society, standardization and pervasive commoditization. “It vindicates an ideal of liberation and/or of individual autonomy, singularity and authenticity”¹⁶⁴. Together with what they call the social critique, these thoughts have contributed to change the way people, as employees have to live their lives. Now, hierarchies are less steep, project groups are assembled for the needs, overall flexibility allows corporations, but also individuals to adjust to the accelerated (and Virillio would argue, that the media and technologies play an

¹⁶⁴ Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiappello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (paper) Conference of Europeanists, March, 14-16, 2002, Chiacgo, p 16.

important role in this acceleration) world we live in. This study is considering only French management literature, but seems generalisable.¹⁶⁵

Do they provide a proof for a strict causal dependency? No. but it seems plausible and an encouraging message for artists. Do they refer to artworks, when they talk about artistic critique? Not explicitly. Therefore the artistic element in the artistic critique may be overrated. But, we subscribe to the argument that the values conveyed with many artworks from these years and previously are isomorphic with the changes that seem to have taken place. The critique has become part of the mainstream.

What kind of contribution can transactional arts make? Capitalism incorporates solutions. Questions may lead to solutions, but questioning alone may lead to a skeptic version of paralysis. To field of art and business, and perhaps transactional art can perhaps make a contribution to open up this crusted discourse and ask new and more constructive questions – and try to give answers. Given for granted, that every answer is to be revised, I still believe, artists should have the courage to give answers instead of asking only questions in a gesture of overcautious skepticism, refined bourgeois display of modesty.

This honorable and refined intellectuality may not have a voice in the roaring/bluster of the power shifts of this century. What can western artists contribute to this new geostrategic landscape? Emerging countries will probably dominate the global negotiations and dictate the conditions of the future century, and the values they pursue will with a very high probability not resemble the values of the 1968 only remotely.

For that matter we will have to acquire knowhow of these domains, we will have to work interdisciplinary with these fields (like we did it with science and technology) not as dilettantes. Therefore I understand transactional art as a critique of critical art and especially critical art criticizing capitalism. In these difficult times concentrating on the *creation* of value seems to me most relevant. Instead of a mere and often dogmatic critique transactional arts challenges to construct values, to create deals, which create value for all involved parties. It is economic experimentation, if one likes. But, outside of the institutions who usually are in

¹⁶⁵ The authors emphasize that the oppression is less visible and may not share the conclusion, that the liberated style of management should be considered an improvement.

charge. (in this sense “institutional critique”) It is time, to take risks again and have the courage to make proposals and take the risks to fail.

In this enterprise the field of finance may play a special role. Perhaps the most relevant “knowledge of power” in capitalism is finance. Finance plays a crucial role in any economic order. As a kind of “meta-business” often referred to as the “head of the economy” it is a business about business, perhaps similarly to philosophy as the knowledge about knowledge. The role of the financial system in a society is to allocate capital and to mitigate risks- the two core prerequisites of any advanced economic system. Stock exchanges are today markets about markets, themselves meta-institutions, as they allow the trading of complex derivatives and so called structured products. They are markets about markets.

The current financial crisis shows that artists, similarly to the society as a whole apparently missed out to detect the activities of an elite, which operated in the last 30 years without much notice or control by the public. It is just an example, where a highly strategically creative “avant-garde” –the financial elite with their financial innovations - became an invisible elite and managed to accumulate massive economic capital and other forms of influence.

Not many artists have reflected this body of knowledge which allowed these elites to operate. However, it is just a suggestion for the practice of artists, to try to watch out and conquer the elite domains of society and their discourses, even if in secrecy. For example, in hindsight, it would have been avant-gardistic if art had embraced, understood and then modified the techniques of so called “financial engineering” including the structuring of financial products under the label of “risk-management” etc.

Even if from the near future onwards the privileged status of finance will probably be limited by regulations etc. its central position in any economy will remain. Therefore, it could be a rich source of inspiration for artists. For example, what are the mechanisms of risk management and can art learn something from the ideas of risk management in finance in order to hedge creative risks? Under the label of risk-management wonder-machines were built, allegedly able to overcome bad outcomes of destinies via social contracts. Creativity is a high-risk business, so what can we artists therefore learn from professional risk managers? Or do we not manage risks and will creativity decline, if we would apply these techniques?

One may keep in mind, that the financial instruments are actually contracts, deals between those who can bear the risks and those who can't. So called Over-the-Counter OTC derivatives

are just another form of creative deal-making. Developing them was a genial case of strategic creativity. Why shouldn't artists work with the same materials? And- perhaps naively, but why for the sake of completeness: can artists contribute to the progress of even financial systems?

Ideally, we would like to think of transactional arts as a platform to experimentally explore current issues of our societies and new forms of social contracts. With the exposure to transactional arts and related ideas, we train our skills for creative deal-making, which are potentially relevant to all domains of society and may even - at best -contribute to the evolution of our economic systems in general and the financial system in particular. This is an highly audacious question where a positive answer is probably far beyond reach. In the following section I will outline some of my artistic projects and research inspired by these findings.