

Impact of Commercialisation on Contemporary Arts

The relationship between art and money, never straight forward historically, has transformed into a new kind of union, at once attractive, stimulating, and ordinary. During the post 2000 boom in art market, the ever steeper excesses of the art market ran the gamut from celebration beach front parties in honour of artists, collectors, or institutions, to VIP dinners on art curated yachts, to any number of art sales and entertainment functions in exclusive, hard to reach places. Such excesses were also evident in the ambitious corporate partnering with art, architecture, and design that progressed from mere sponsorship to the commissioning of exclusive artist designed consumer products.

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Introduction

The impact of commercial effect in contemporary art in India as well as world is due to the globalisation in 1990s. In order to go behind the diverse significant exhibitions in India of post 1990s, this has map out a complete structure of commercialization on contemporary art in India. Before 1990 very few art exhibition were taking place, basically commercial art galleries in two metro cities in India, Delhi and Mumbai. The government museum and gallery have given their best effort to build the contemporary art scenario. Also we need to focus on installation and new media rather than painting, which have broken the some kind of tradition in contemporary art scenario. The best example is Delhi, where, during 2000, there were a lot of private art galleries built up in different parts of the city, although many investors do not even get back to open small gallery spaces in five star hotels, where lot of foreigners accommodate for a few days. As well as, most of the elite started going to those spaces for different kinds of works and events. During that period gallery persons did not care about work of art itself. They ran their business very rapidly only for getting money, where every artist's discussion with one another "now art market is on boom.....so let's move forward for adequate production."

We would consider some of the significant exhibitions held in different part of this country, mostly in Delhi and Bombay, as well as some of the major art centres across the world, i.e. London, Paris, Beijing, Hong Kong, Tokyo, New York and Seoul etc. All the great masters in India have never thought about their work of art to take forward through the commercial prospective, but there is a strong evidence to put the question on impact of commercial effect in contemporary art during post 2000 decade. Before the year 2000, artists were selling out their art works through the auction house, thus this is completely not considered as commercial market. If we look at the works of art in 15th century in western country, basically in Europe, they were also selling their works through the auction house only. The same things also occurred in not only India but also every art capital in world by the 2000. This scenario drastically changed in 2000, which has never happened before. I would like to say here, in the case of India, there are many more reasons to be converted a completely commercial market within a few years. The first reason is that there is a lot of black money floating between bureaucrats and businessmen. People with black money try to hide it and many think that, investment in art is the safest way to do that. The second reason is that, due to technological advancement, the developing third world countries, especially countries like India, are trying to build their nations very fast. We can clearly see a tremendous pace in development in India which we cannot be found in any other country. Here, the artists also playing a very significant role in creating an 'Art Market' as well as marketing their own works of art. The artists also, with the help of technology, are producing their art work very rapidly as well as are selling the works and are making large money unlike a few decades down the lane. Not many think about the future of their art work and how to develop their art work and almost all started chasing the money. All the artists are contributing to make 'art' a capitalist activity and institution.

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There are many factors that affect the conditions for the production and distribution of contemporary works of art. One reason is that complex and thought-provoking art is having a harder time than ever, not only to come about but also to circulate beyond an already converted audience. Another reason is that entertaining and easily digestible art is becoming more and more prevalent in the public eye, almost synonymous with 'art' itself. Both developments are connected with new power dynamics in the wake of globalization, neoliberal financial policies of deregulation, consumerism, and commercialisation of every product and service, and the boom of the commercial art markets, especially from 2000 to 2008. Some signs of this are prominently visible as contemporary art work is seen as an asset or property and as a status symbol. This approach to art has increased, with growing volumes of sales and levels of prices. Auction sales rose, for example, eightfold between 1998 and 2008. In spite of the hostile attitudes from many galleries, the old divide between primary and secondary markets, between galleries and auction houses, is narrowing, and sales now take place through many other venues too, such as art fairs in art capital cities and through the Internet. Not surprisingly, this means that the relationships between artists, dealers, and collectors are in a flux and that commercial success is gendered (A few artists are consistently catching the highest prices and stand for the biggest volumes of sales). This affects the 'competency profiles' of artists as well as critics and curators: nowadays artists are regularly expected to interpret and market their own work, to actively build up a 'brand.' As commerce and recent art is becoming an increasingly intimate and powerful pair, and as the criteria of economic efficiency invades art production as well as curating, it is necessary to scrutinize the mechanisms at play and what they generate. Because there is no denying that the entire world of art is influenced by these mechanisms, regardless of your proximity to or distance from the drama. Even if you are committed to self-organized and research-based artistic practices that appear to be detached from commerce and you are in a position to choose how to generate income by, for example, having access to public support, these structural changes will have an impact on you. There are certainly other markets in the art world, like the non-profit market of emerging artists and the market of trendy themes, but they have all become increasingly entangled with one another, causing many cultural producers to opt for an escape into the 'minor arts,' in an attempt to avoid the 'major arts' of the mainstream. In any case, economization in the arts in general, and growing commercialization in particular, is a reality to reckon with rather than to shy away from, if you are interested in making space for art to actualize its potential as an indispensable form of understanding and as a means to feed new imagination. Contemporary Art and Its Commercial Markets: A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios is precisely an attempt to map and analyze one aspect of recent changes in the production and distribution of contemporary art, namely the state of the commercial art market; to put things on the table which have been sensed and guessed at for a while

but for "fear of touching" have not been compiled and openly debated.

Five new essays, a specially written introduction, one already existing text, and a chapter from a novel help us understand and question the complicated and contested entanglements of contemporary art and its commercial markets. The move during recent decades from public care of art to private passion is theorized by Suhail Malik¹ and Andrea Phillips², who argue that the art market today embodies the 'truth' of all price-setting as an operation based on capitalization rather than on production and consumption, as Marxism and neoclassical economics respectively would have it. This argument makes both the art market and the wider economy within a capitalist system truly abstract. Alain Queminn³ provides data which clearly shows that globalization is more of a mirage than a real effect in the art world. Despite the vigorous rhetoric around geography not being important anymore, and more art events happening in different parts of the world, the most influential geographical zones for the art economy remain the United States and Western Europe with Germany as a stronghold.

The augmented role of art fairs and biennials, with three fairs in existence in 1970 and close to two hundred in 2011, is the focus of Stefano Baia Curioni's⁴ essay. Isabelle Graw⁵ proposes that we substitute Pierre Bourdieu's⁶ definition of the art world as 'relatively autonomous' with 'relatively heteronymous.'

In this way the growing influence from other spheres is underlined, particularly the shift from retail to corporate models of production and distribution, and the reason of celebrity culture known from the fashion and movie industries. New sales venues, such as the Internet, and their implications are considered by Noah Horowitz⁷ Karen van den Berg⁸ and Ursula Pasero⁹ discuss the importance, economic and other, of the 'monumentalism' visible in projects such as Olafur Eliasson's¹⁰ waterfalls in New York, by looking at new production models and corporate-like studios where many more people and different professions are involved in the fabrication of art. However, large studios where artistic work is outsourced have certainly been known in history. In his insightful introduction Olav Velthuis¹¹ proposes that the art market is changing cyclically rather than linearly: thus New Delhi and Mumbai retain their leading positions on the art market, and Sotheby's and Christie's are still dominant despite Chinese and Indian auction competition. Several circuits of commerce coexist with one spectacular top circuit that attracts the most media attention today, obscuring the others.

This circuit is also the subject of chapter nine in Goldin+Senneby's¹² incrementally and ghost-written novel 'Looking for Headless,' which blends fact and fiction, philosophy and offshore finance, and art and mystery in uncanny ways. The report also contains indications of what the future might harbour in regard to art and economy. Among the predictions are that monumentalism has peaked and that in ten years artists will tend to become on-and-off artists rather than continuous practitioners.

Online sales are likely to grow, despite the value of 'in-the-flesh experience,' and the art world will be

multi polar, with networks of relatively independent regional art centres with their own markets, such as Beijing, New Delhi, Mumbai, and Johannesburg and others. As they will be based on the liquidity of high-income earners, the commercial art markets will depend on the fate of the finance sector and its performance. If the financial economy grows, agents with commercial interests in art who are part of the 'love-of-art' tradition will continue to promote 'privatized love' and will forget about 'public good' as a motive. Or, in the words of Malik and Phillips, the "endemic configuration of people, space, and shared but unequal love will be the ever more prevalent shape of public galleries and museums over at least the next two decades as this type of inventive public-private methodology becomes increasingly necessary to maintain institutions in the midst of the decline of state funding for culture."

An urgent question is then how, in light of this coming development, we can prepare and harness as much self-determination as possible for artists and their practices.

The report is published by Tensta Konsthall¹³ and Sternberg¹⁴ Press on the occasion of the curated project. *Abstract Possible: The Stockholm Synergies*, which is taking place at Tensta Konsthall, the Center for Fashion Studies at the Stockholm University, and the auction house Bukowskis all located in Stockholm at the beginning of 2012. Tensta Konsthall is one of many small-scale visual arts organizations struggling to continue supporting genuinely experimental art-making and curating in the wake of increasingly tough circumstances for fundraising. As a private foundation primarily relying on public subsidies, Tensta Konsthall is nevertheless forced to look for additional funding sources, in an economy where the repercussions of changes in the commercial art markets are more palpable than before. All this is in a cultural context where patronage beyond starting private institutions is as rare as needles in a haystack, and where tax reduction for donations is not even part of the discussion.

Abstract Possible is a research project that explores notions of abstraction by taking contemporary art as its starting point. Three main strands of abstraction are explored and complicated in *Abstract Possible*: formal abstraction, economic abstraction, and withdrawal strategies (Latin *abstrahere*: to withdraw). All of these pertain, in straight as well as roundabout ways, to how art is allowed to come into being today and how it can 'sit' in culture and society. Furthermore, each strand loosely corresponds with a venue in Stockholm: formal abstraction at Tensta Konsthall, withdrawal strategies at the Center for Fashion Studies, and economic abstraction at Bukowskis.

The Stockholm manifestation of *Abstract Possible* takes a closer look at this last strand, economic abstraction art and economy by accepting the invitation to curate one of two yearly 'primary exhibitions' at Scandinavia's oldest auction house, where the works will be for sale at set prices. The artists Goldin Senneby have been invited by Tensta Konsthall to shape the framework of the Bukowskis exhibition, and they in turn have invited the poet Mara Lee who has provided a confidential policy poem to

be followed by the staff at Bukowskis. In this way 'implication' is a significant trope in *Abstract Possible*: The Stockholm Synergies, which concretely becomes part of that which it wants to discuss. Accordingly, the Bukowskis exhibition will raise new funds for Tensta Konsthall, materializing the realities of today's 'entangled economies' and landing right at the center of Malik and Phillip's discussion about private and public funding. Previous iterations of the research project have happened at Malmö Konsthall in 2010, at Museo Tamayo in Mexico City and White Space in Zurich in 2011.

Particularly over the last fifteen years a plethora of examples of formal abstraction, both geometric and expressive, or gestural, have been visible in art. This work often seems to buy into the idea of ultra-subjective positions and unproblematic aesthetic enjoyment as well as certain visual codes that are taken at face value—as style rather than structure and history. However, in addition to the many cases in art and design today in which geometric abstraction becomes a lifestyle indicator, artists are contemplating and engaging with the legacy of modernist abstraction, also formally, as the result of highly specific artistic and ideological trajectories. And yet abstraction is not purely a formal construction; the concept of abstraction has also within a Marxist framework been applied to describe all relations within a capitalist system. This has recently been extended to the logic and distortion of scale engendered by the post-Fordist, late capitalist economy. Working conditions and circumstances of production are other salient reference points here. All this is happening within a culture and an economy in which we literally 'live under abstraction,' although the economic recession has more recently put such abstraction into relief. Or as the art critic and theoretician Sven Lütticken¹⁵ put it: "We are the natives of abstraction."

At the same time, it is easy to observe yet another manifestation of abstraction, namely in strategies of withdrawal used by artists and other cultural producers. It is abstraction as a conscious means to step aside, obscure, and enter this formal terrain 'at an angle,' often with the aim of creating more space for manoeuvring through self-organized initiatives. These developments have been discussed in terms of 'strategic essentialism' as well as 'strategic separatism.' They can also be seen as a form of 'disintermediation,' that is, as ways to circumvent the established distribution channels and their patterns of influence. Sometimes the withdrawal strategies seem to be a reaction to pressures of spectacularization and access, at other times they appear to draw on specific art historical developments. In both instances abstraction is simultaneously a powerful artistic and intellectual technique and an effect of capitalism's unique forms of value production: it is at once a knowing perhaps shrewd method and an imposed situation. Therefore, abstraction is, like contemporary art, essentially of our time, a time in which the growth and change of the commercial markets and the repercussion of this change are at the same time an everyday reality and a point of contestation.

References

1. Suhail Malik is a writer and holds a readership in critical studies at Goldsmiths, London, where he

- is Programme Co-Director of the MFA Fine Art. For 2012-13, Malik is a Visiting Faculty at the Centre for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York.
2. Andrea Phillips (born 20 July 1974) is an American transmedia game designer and writer. She has been active in the genres of transmedia storytelling and alternate reality games (ARGs), in a variety of roles, since 2001. She has written for, designed, or substantially participated in the creation of *Perplex City*, the BAFTA-nominated *Routes* (a project of Channel 4), and *The 2012 Experience*, a marketing campaign for the film *2012*.
 3. Alain Quemin, born in 1967, is a sociologist French specialist in the art, including the contemporary art. He is a Professor of Art at the Institute of European Studies of the University of Paris VIII and an honorary member of the Institut Universitaire de France.
 4. Stefano Baia Curioni was born on August 31st, 1956. Degree in Economics from Università Bocconi. Associate Professor of Economic History. DEA and Doctorat de Troisième Cycle, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris Institute of Economic History.
 5. Isabelle Graw is a Professor in Art Theory and Art History at Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Stadelschule), Frankfurt am Main, where she co-founded the Institute of Art Criticism. She is an art critic and co-founder of *Texte zur Kunst* in Berlin.
 6. Pierre Bourdieu was born on 1 August 1930, was a French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher. Starting from the role of economic capital for social positioning, Bourdieu pioneered investigative frameworks and terminologies such as cultural, social, and symbolic capital, and the concepts of habitus, field or location, and symbolic violence to reveal the dynamics of power relations in social life. His work emphasized the role of practice and embodiment or forms in social dynamics and worldview construction, often in dialogue and opposition to universalized Western philosophical traditions. He built upon the theories of Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Edmund Husserl, Georges Canguilhem, Karl Marx, Gaston Bachelard, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Erwin Panofsky, and Marcel Mauss. A notable influence on Bourdieu was Blaise Pascal, after whom Bourdieu titled his *Pascalian Meditations*.
 7. Horowitz is an Art Historian and expert on the international art market. He is the author of *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Market* (Princeton University Press) has contributed to publications for The Serpentine Gallery, London.
 8. Karen van den Berg studied Art History, Classical Archeology and Nordic Philology in Saarbrücken and Basel, where in 1995 the German art historian Gottfried Boehm to paint with the work "The Passion to view image at Matthias Grünewald" doctorate (as a book: Duisburg / Berlin 1997). In 1988 she curated a freelance curator with her first husband Jörg van den Berg numerous exhibitions in public spaces and exhibition institutions (including in Aarau (Switzerland), Berlin, Duisburg, Witten and Friedrichshafen).
 9. Olafur Eliasson (born 1967) is a Danish-Icelandic artist known for sculptures and large-scale installation art employing elemental materials such as light, water, and air temperature to enhance the viewer's experience. In 1995 he established Studio Olafur Eliasson in Berlin, a laboratory for spatial research. Eliasson represented Denmark at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003 and later that year installed *The Weather Project* in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern, London. Eliasson has engaged in a number of projects in public space, including the intervention *Green River*, carried out in various cities between 1998 and 2001; the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2007, London, a temporary pavilion designed with the Norwegian architect Kjetil Thorsen; and The New York City Waterfalls, commissioned by Public Art Fund in 2008.
 10. Olav Velthuis is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam. At the Department, he is the Director of the Master Programs. Before, he worked for several years as a Staff Reporter Globalization for the Dutch daily *de Volkskrant*. He is currently studying the Emergence and Development of Art Markets in the BRIC-countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China). The project is financed by a VIDI-grant from the Dutch Science Foundation (NWO). His research interests include Economic Sociology, Sociology of Art, Cultural Sociology and Sociology of consumption. Velthuis is the author of *Imaginary Economics* (NAi Publishers, 2005) and *Talking Prices. Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Princeton University Press, 2005), which received the Viviana Zelizer Distinguished Book Award of the American Sociological Association for the best book in Economic Sociology (2006). Together with Maria Lind of Tensta Konsthall (Stockholm), he recently edited the book *Contemporary Art and Its Commercial Markets A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios* (Sternberg Press, 2012). His journalistic writings have appeared in among others Art Forum, the Art Newspaper and the Financial Times. His work has been cited in international media including Newsweek, Die Zeit, Corriere della Sera, The Independent, Il Sole 24 Ore, the Freakonomics Blog of the New York Times, and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Velthuis is member of the editorial board of *Sociologie*. He was board member of the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture (Fonds BKVB), which was the main government-sponsored foundation for visual artists in the Netherlands.

11. Goldin +Senneby (since 2004, based in Stockholm) is a framework for collaboration set up by artists Simon Goldin and Jakob Senneby; exploring juridical, financial and spatial constructs through notions of the performative and the virtual. Their collaboration started with *The Port* (2004–06); a series of insertions into the online world *Second Life*, exhibited among other places on Art port, Whitney Museum in 2005. They are also known for the project *After Microsoft*, in which they re-photographed the site in Sonoma valley where *Bliss*, the default wallpaper in Windows XP, was taken. In their more recent body of work, known as *Headless* (2007), they approach the sphere of offshore finance, and its production of virtual space through legal code. Looking at strategies of withdrawal and secrecy, they trace an offshore company on the Bahamas called *Headless Ltd.* A ghost written detective novel continuously narrates their investigations. This work was exhibited at the 28th Sao Paulo Art Biennial, *The Power Plant*, Toronto, with an epilogue at the Kadist Art Foundation in Paris.
12. Tensta Konsthall is an art center dedicated to Contemporary Art located in Tensta, a suburb of Stockholm, Sweden. Tensta Konsthall is housed in a former storage space underneath a shopping mall. It operates as a private foundation, funded by the city of Stockholm and the Swedish Arts Council. It also relies on financial support from public sources. Tensta Konsthall was founded in 1998, part of a grassroots initiative in conjunction with Stockholm being the Capital of Culture of Europe.
13. Sternberg (born December 8, 1949) is an American Psychologist and Psychometrician. He is currently a Professor of Human Development at Cornell University. Sternberg was previously president of the University of Wyoming but resigned voluntarily, effective 31 December 2013, on 14 November 2013. He formerly was Professor of Psychology and Provost at Oklahoma State University. He was formerly the Dean of Arts and Sciences at Tufts University, IBM Professor of Psychology and Education at Yale University, and the President of the American Psychological Association. He is a member of the editorial boards of numerous journals, including *American Psychologist*. Sternberg has a BA from Yale University and a PhD from Stanford University. Gordon Bower was his PhD advisor. He holds thirteen Honorary Doctorates from two North American, one South American, one Asian, and nine European universities, and additionally holds an Honorary Professorship at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. He is currently also a Distinguished Associate of The Psychometrics Centre at the University of Cambridge. Among his major contributions to psychology are the *Triarchic theory of intelligence*, several influential theories related to creativity, wisdom, thinking styles, love and hate, and is the author
- of over 1500 articles, book chapters, and books. He was named the 24th President of The University of Wyoming, a post he took up on July 1, 2013. On November 14, 2013, after four months in office, Dr. Sternberg resigned as president of University of Wyoming, as reported by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on November 15, 2013 (“President of U of Wyoming Abruptly Resigns” by Lindsay Ellis). The *Chronicle* described his tenure as “a period that saw rapid turnover among senior administrators and unsettled the campus.”
14. Sven Lütticken was born in Kempen, Germany, in 1971. Lives and works in Amsterdam. Art Critic and Historian Sven Lütticken studied Art History at the *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam and the *Freie Universität*, Berlin. In 2004, he was granted the Prize for Art Criticism of the BKVB fund, Amsterdam. Lütticken teaches at the *Vrije Universiteit* Amsterdam, and is the editor for the *Witte Raaf*. He publishes regularly in (inter)national art magazines such as *Jong Holland*, *Artforum*, *New Left Review*, *Afterimage*, *Texte fur Kunst*, *Camera Austria*, and contributes to catalogues and exhibitions as writer or guest curator.