

Ten Statements on Art and Culture

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ART IS NOT CULTURE NOR IS CULTURE ART

Somebody tells me the piece is consumerist, over-consumption, smartphone, logo-fest, beautiful skinny people, selfie, pop-overkill and that's just the beginning...

Shit, this probably means that the work is or appears benevolent to contemporary capitalism or neo-liberalism [NL] in general. Goddamn, what did I do wrong? So wrong. Fine enough and I ask myself [oh, yes I was around in the 90's so I still use critique], what makes, or what are the properties needed for a work of art in 2014 to be none of the above or simpler, something that is not correlated to NL? Check it out, me and a few million other artists and etc. have asked that question for decades and does it look like any of us or them came up with a solution? I don't think so. I don't think so even a lil bit. If one or a few of us had, wouldn't it be, like, wise to say something or at least make a career from it on the art market. Oh blast, the solution to non-NL correlated works of art must be that they are kept very very secret, cuz when they enter the art market, which we know absorbs everything with value, they will obviously be available both on webpages of NL correlated galleries, on smartphones and the artist will pose for Scene & Herd next to Anton Vidokle or why not Raymundas Malasauskas or Hans Ulrich Obrist (obviously all men).

ART IS NOT SYNONYMOUS WITH CULTURE BUT IS ALWAYS TAKING PLACE AGAINST A CULTURAL BACKGROUND.

Or, when last did you lay eyes, experience, feel, listen to or even hear rumors about an art that wasn't standing knee deep in that poop called capitalism? Exactly, you didn't. Because, if you did you'd probably fly away or something, vanish. Our problem today is not whether or not we are inscribed in capitalism, but that the enemy and the sponsor of the emancipation is one and the same. It's not that we have a choice right, we don't live in capitalism, life itself is capitalism and it's not like we can call in sick.

Or turn it around. Who was most happy about, and who gained most from Occupy Wall Street (remember that movement, aha Zizek said something right...)? The answer is obvious, yep – Wall Street loved it. They sanctioned it, celebrated it, subsidized it and even licked it. Wall Street knew that business won't be interrupted. Hello, the wheels of capitalism are not about to stop turning because of some noise in a park. Nothing in fact can make those wheels stop, and I mean it.

Whilst those petty dread-locks-equipped-political-theory-post-grads-at-New-School were screaming and organizing themselves in any lateral sort of way, wow – Wall Street could do even dirtier business (no one was looking their direction...), harvest ideas from the activist below and it goes without saying that the suits had the time of their life – how rad isn't it to host a bunch of anti-capitalist in your backyard. That's like a female without a bra in *Mad Men*.

CULTURE HOWEVER IS NOT ART. A CULTURE EQUALS ITS CIRCULATION OF VALUE, WHEREAS TO ART CIRCULATED VALUE IS SUPPLEMENTARY.

Disclaimer. As we all know anti- is as in as the pro, the obedient, benevolent or opportunistic. There's no such thing as a subversive, critical you name it that's not soaked in political economy, or as Wittgenstein had it, it is first with the elaboration of an altogether different grammar that something can transform in a non-reactive manner. See what I mean, change is not enough what is needed is to change how change changes.

Admiration. It's kind of cute to experience artists that suddenly need to make a piece about or addressing some injustice, that support some cause, that take ecology seriously or in a collaboration with an architect provide some new form of shelter for the homeless or something involving children. In all it's care and sweetness doesn't it look a little silly to just because some inflight magazine featured a devastating spread about something really really incredibly cruel and bad USA that you, the artist, are reaching out. "I have kids you know, and I want them to..." – Seriously.

It's too late, there's no we shall overcome when you at the same time enjoy seven hundred thousand euro subsidies from the Belgian state, and it's after all you that is making something about, exactly about that nobody should be poisoned, hungry, violated, pollution and global warming, nothing will or can change because you are fiddling around in your studio for another three months and do a showing for your peers. Nobody is happier than you when you cancel an engagement in Israel at the last moment, but isn't it just a little bit too easy to support the Palestinians from your studio in Neuköln or when having drinks with the NY downtown scene. If you wanna be engaged what's the price you're willing to pay for engaging? Precisely, you're not willing to pay any price at all, because as we all know you cancelled Tel Aviv in order to boost your creds vis the art council, some festival director – to announce it on your webpage. Yep, you are approximately as hot as Sinead O'Conner bashing Miley for being a sell-out and a victim. How naïve can you be? "-Oh, but she said my video..." Sure, but did that make an open letter promoted all over the place the appropriate approach? You know if you wanna be engaged you can stop making art, art will not miss you. If you wanna be engaged that's all super but perhaps you should rethink that you are showing documentation of your dirty work in that upcoming biennale, that you are making bags of money when selling or touring the schtuff. I'm not saying you should stop or start anything, but you know our polluted earth doesn't need another performance, installation, intervention or even a small ass painting. Nobody starving, lacking medication, or working in sweatshops will ever notice or gain access to your work, but if you inform them about it, it's quite likely that they find it pretentious of you to tell them about the importance of democracy or whatever you think is good for them.

CULTURE IS THE CONDITION NECESSARY FOR ART. ANY CULTURE. NO CULTURE IS MORE OR LESS SUITABLE FOR ART, BUT DIFFERENT CULTURES PROVOKE DIFFERENT FORMS OR EXPRESSIONS OF ART.

Ecology, global warming, injustice, children, any concern is a good and important one and as political beings it is absolutely our responsibility to know, care and support, to work for equality and the right to life but to translate your life into your art is tacky independently of

what it is, and why should anybody be interested in your issues and problems, whatever about ecology or your frustrating love life or personal traumas. You are not your art, and Joseph Beuys is not cool.

To sum up. Art as much as anything else is part of the capitalist forces, either on the level of expression and representation or in respect of subsidies, grants, circulation and distribution. We are fucked no matter what, so now what do we do? There's no independent art and has never been, and that is obviously art's and our lucky day. There can be more or less independent art but it's always and thoroughly inscribed in political economy, doesn't matter if it's some rich guy, the art council, the church, trust funds, institutional something – there is no outside. Mind you a radically independent art is not one you can make a living from, feel a bit successful or not with, end up in a magazine with, you name it, in fact a radically independent art cannot support an aesthetic experience, and yet what the aesthetic experience is, is a sort of collapse of comprehension, i.e. of dependency, into a moment [however endlessly short] of utter and excessive independence. Or say it differently, a collapse of identity into intensity, of perspective into horizon, of navigation into speed, of survival into the orgasmic, of reflection into pure production, karaoke to trauma.

ART CARRIES WITH IT THAT IT POTENTIALLY PRODUCES OR DIFFERENTIATES CULTURE. HOWEVER, IN ORDER FOR THIS PRODUCTION TO NOT COINCIDE WITH PRODUCTION IN RESPECT OF CULTURE, IT CAN NOT NOT IN THE LAST INSTANCE BE CONTINGENT.

How could somebody possibly consider that art's responsibility is to make life chill, to sooth our minds, calm our senses? Rancière obviously, but harmless. Or even worse to inform us about injustices, the fact that our world is dying or whatever. Art's job is not to be critical, that's just some hiccup necessary because of post-structuralism [if Derrida is/was right and with him Butler, art can only be language and thus conventional, hence rather than concerned with beauty and the sublime, art must concern itself with language in either of two ways: either as forms of meta, e.g. conceptual art, appropriation etc., or in respect of political economy, and there are too many examples, perhaps the worst being Martha Rosler or some collective with two members where one was born in ex-Yugoslavia.]

CULTURE IS THROUGH AND THROUGH INSCRIBED FORMS OF MEASURE AND DIVISIBILITY. ART ON THE OTHER HAND ALWAYS WITHDRAWS FROM DIVISIBILITY, IF ON NO OTHER LEVEL IN RESPECT OF SUPPLEMENTARY VALUE.

In fact, in art's job description it's clearly stated, that the responsibility is to make life a living hell, a pain in the ass and confuse us foundationally [philosophy and science suffer from the same misconception. There's a reason why the library has two different shelves one for philosophy the other for self-help-realize-yourself literature. Philosophy is not like holding someone's hand.] Art's job is to be violent... But wait a sec! It's defo not any regular punch in the face, attack for fuck's sake or bonsai. Not at all, art's violence is way worse and it's certainly not connected to any gangster set-up or army, especially not an army. Nope, art is and must – particularly under our present Western and global predicament – be, however embarrassing it might feel to use D/G terminology in two thousand something else – a

warmachine. As we know those machines that aren't apparatuses or dispositive or if at best in reverse, are singular. They are loners that fight for the sake of fighting and don't give a shit about anything else than the battle. Warmachines defy interpretation and live only in retrospect – when they act they exist and are not concerned with life, never mind consciousness, and how could they, they are singular, they are sovereign but contrary to the king they will do anything to stay out there in the dark forest, remain in the non-reflective, the libidinal.

CULTURE IMPLIES THE FORMATION AND PRODUCTION OF IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY. CULTURE IS CARING, CONTROLLING, CONDITIONAL AND FUNDAMENTALLY TERRITORIAL.

When the king fears the sovereignty he's been given and covers his tracks with law, courts, parties and babes, the warmachine withdraws from any form of cheap engagements, withdraws from being identified and converted into a subject, obviously because at the very moment it gains identity it's no longer a warmachine – no longer sovereign enough, is no longer an object, becomes economical, reflexive and a matter of affordance and investment. Now, the thang with machines is that they are as merciless to themselves as they are to their "enemies," which is everyone and body, the body, the law and the temptation to be part of the army, i.e. be part of "gemeinschaft" and exchange sovereignty for the anonymity of the assembly [Assemblies are not places for decisions, for action or refusal but for chitchat, idle talk and palaver. Spangbergianism p. 20]. The warmachine is ready, always ready to betray all sides including itself and it does continuously, however as much as this betrayal is ubiquitous – it spares nobody or thing – it is also specific in the sense that it carries a tendency towards being "purely" libidinal. Warmachines fuck probability, reflexivity, investment and must be contingent. Warmachines just don't know the concept of negotiation. Said otherwise, the warmachine produces no other responsibility than to it self as it self and it could not be otherwise. Deleuze and Guattari writes in *What Is Philosophy* something like, the responsibility of the artist is the production of the possibility of an altogether different experience. Obviously they are wrong. It's so not the artists' job, it's the art that needs to go to work. The artist as an identity is not causal to his work, nor is an art a causal or directional representation of the artist's life, inner being or anything. If this was the situation Michel Houellebecq should have been brought to court, Jonathan Meese put away for good and, do I need to say something about Tracey Emin. However that does not say that the artist and the art doesn't function as kind of superimposed ambiances, related but more like grooves than cousins. If it wasn't like that the artist would evidently be judged not on the basis of aesthetics but in respect of politics, ethics, moral, righteousness. In other words the art would transform to justifications of the artist's life, and perhaps this is exactly what is happening right now – on several layers – when NL-infused art councils more than ever instrumentalise artistic production to fit policy documents issued from above, support minorities, activate kids or countryside, fit organizational standards, report every cent, organize audience talks and at the same time be contemporary, urgent, socially engaged, provocative (a little bit), networked, transparent, accessible, gender-conscious, queer-active, fireproofed, in short licensed by the same marketing department that makes both the IKEA catalogue and the program for The Hayward Gallery.

ART IN RESPECT OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IMPLIES, CONCENTRIC YET NOT DIRECTIONAL (STRATEGIC AND VOID OF CONDITIONS), WITHDRAWAL FROM OR UNDERMINING OF IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY. ART IN RESPECT OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE THEREFORE IS DETERRITORIALIZING.

Compressed this means, an art that proposes itself as in any respect valuable, in any respect claims itself as responsible is always by necessity running errands for NL, it can not be otherwise. Good attempts, sure it's great that some artist wants to distribute syringes to whoever, but what is it as art, what is it as politics, what is this a moral Mr-freakin'-charity [leave that to Hollywood] – it's not art's job to care for people, and as long as artists do it we can be sure society won't spend money doing it. If we think artists living in Soho or Chelsea had a negative impact on the speeding up of gentrification, this darkness has now spread to every area thinkable, and who enjoys it most, aha capitalism, NL and the suits on Wall Street. More over, starting with responsibility, identity or community will reduce art into production of an already possible experience, one that is only and at best a variation of what is already available. If we want change, which is certainly not the same as improvement, possible is not enough. Possible, is measurable, probabilistic, discrete, critical, political, ethical and moral. See what I mean, only an art that's absolutely irresponsible to anything else than to itself as itself is capable of producing a proper aesthetic experience, an all together different experience exactly because it has no relations. Oh no, there's no guarantees, potentiality can only emerge through the production of the possible... and yet, it wont happen by itself. There is no mistake, there is nothing accidental going on here [like you know Butler had it, productive mistake – bleeeuurgh] – not at all, we cannot produce it but we can make ourselves available to its emergence, and the making-available must happen through and in language and reason, in history and through perspective. We make a distinction between conceptual art – which is all about tautology and translation, and concept art, which implies to expose the visitor, audience, public to a concept, an abstract-machine or a machinic-assemblage. Concept art potentially can be a real pain, verging on fear whereas conceptual art – at least after 1971 – certainly is like holding hands.

CULTURE BY NECESSITY IMPLIES A COAGULATION OF PERSPECTIVE. ART ON THE CONTRARY IS AN INDICATION OF A FLUIDIZATION INTO HORIZON.

Pronto, an art that takes D/G for serious – the production of the possibility of an altogether different experience [such an experience can evidently not be produced hence production is based on available technologies, organization, knowledge etc. but can only be the production of possible...] – must be an art that makes no aspirations to communicate anything at all, cannot have political ambitions, no concerns for or against anything at all, it must dismiss tolerance, openness, negotiation, interpretation, decency, moral, ethics and politics – it can only communicate itself as itself, i.e. it is an art that communicates the potentiality of communication, or pure communicability.

It has no identity.

It exists but is not something.

Something forty years ago Godard said, “not a just image, just an image.” Even longer ago Barnett Newman said: “-What I want with the paintings? I just want the paint on the canvas to look as beautiful as it does in the can.”

CULTURE IMPLIES FORMS OF GOVERNANCE, WHICH INITIATING MOMENT ALWAYS IS TOTALITARIAN. ART IS ALWAYS IS UNIVERSAL, IN SO MUCH THAT IT IS THE VERY ABSENCE OF GOVERNANCE. CULTURE THEREFORE IS THROUGH AND THROUGH CORRELATED TO POLITICS, WHEREAS ART, IN RESPECT OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE, COLLAPSES POLITICS INTO DOCTRINE, HOWEVER A DOCTRINE THAT REFERS ONLY TO ITSELF AS ITSELF. CULTURE IS NEGOTIATED WHEREAS ART IS ONE.

Two artists that might not conventionally be bunched together but what appears to connect them is a sort of grand modernist belief in something, should we say “pure,” and something pure cannot issue any kind of responsibility, it’s pure because it cannot produce responsibilities, it has no relations, it’s not a subject, it is a warmachine. Godard’s “just an image” is an image void of moral, ethics, politics, it is an image that is void of identity, of life, and yet exists, similar to Newman’s paintings. It is my conviction that we today must re-issue Godard and Newman’s observations although not its modernist pathos – no there’s no essence around, not since 1969 [Kosuth], even less after 1971 [Nixon dissolves gold standard] and so on... This is not a matter of searching for an essence, universality, something “pure,” on the contrary it is rather about the production of its possibility as potentiality, to make “it” show up, force it out, smoke the shit – because only that which is “pure,” that which is not subject, that which is just an image, thing, movement – only that which is absolutely irresponsible, worthless, can change how change changes. It can of course only be an endlessly short moment/an eternity, because the moment when this some something produces extension, is granted relations, location, context, it is nothing else than conventional and inscribed in capital, NL, politics, ethics and moral. But just before that, art can be an accelerationism [accelerationism must be kept strictly libidinal] capable of anything, it’s not an openness it’s absolutely open, it’s unconditional at the last instance, it is as pure as simple existence, it is and fucks the rest. And you know what, to start off it sure is capable of setting our entire political economy on fuckin’ fire.