

The specific context of art in Germany in the 80s and 90s was deliberately anti-commercial and supported by independently wealthy artists, gallerists and patrons. This context was initiated after the economic boom of predominantly male painters of the previous generation. Painting was a dirty word in the 90s and artists fortified an alternative space that was continually evading its own canonization. In America, at the same time, artists and gallerists contextualized themselves within this European tradition of kunst. This led to cross-hybridizations between the continents. Note: in order to be truly rigorous, this tradition of the alternative art space can be pre-dated to Christopher D'Arcangelo and Peter Nadin decades before. but was still enmeshed within the Conceptual Art experiments. (It goes without saying that American Fine Arts started in 1986. It has been institutionalized by Bard CCS and is common knowledge to any "theory bro art student.") In the Lower East Side, Alleged Gallery began and years to follow, Reena Spaulings was founded. On Orchard, Orchard Gallery would begin shortly after. Then Miguel Abreu was founded. All of this anti-commercial work was tied to the theoretical advancements of the importation of structuralist and post-structuralist theories (from France) by the Ivy League literature departments (but to be precise, we should include Johns Hopkins where Derrida caused an outrage during the seminal structuralism conference). This artistic context specifically embedded the University Discourse within the discursive space of the gallery system. Years later, October would canonize this context back into academia, fortifying the private sector as a space of theoretical practice. These artists from the 80s and 90s would take prestigious positions at German kunstakademie-s. This co-option provided an institutional power structure for previously excluded artists who had to run experimental project spaces. Undergrads would then flock to Europe for the alternative equivalent of the American MFA. This created a specific context for students who were dis-empowered to mobilize themselves within the network. The unfortunate aftermath was a younger generation of anti-institutional artists within the very institution, i.e. these artists learned to simultaneously critique the power structure while covertly assimilating power through developing new formalisms of painting and sculpture for example, while mimicking the social praxis of the Meisters. The apparatus for the link between conceptual structuration of the work AND the market already existed. Artnews reported first about Zombie Formalism and then a decade or more later Zombie Figuration.

I will now list 6 positions today that are due to this nexus between the University discourse and the market.

- 1) The creation of work that is intentionally amateur and conventional with extreme specificity in terms of reference points. This work is only legitimated by the assimilation of social power within the alternative project space context. Outsiders making the same work would not have the context for acceptance because of social elitism.

- 2) Project spaces which deliberately present themselves as anti-institutional, but through a bait and switch disguise their eventual presentation of institutional artists once they have solidified their previously nascent context. Alternative art world consensus informs the direction of such spaces.

3) The exhibition of work that creates a hermeneutic halting problem, i.e. the comprehension of the work is deferred through specificity of generic signifiers and obfuscation. This work also relies on the consensus of the artist network for its acceptance.

4) The creation of work which fetishizes Otherness as a form of derive and detour to circumvent the art world consensus. Outsiderness as style. Aestheticization of camp/kitsch/neurodivergent alterity.

5) The expanded field of arte povera, specifically the use of consumerist excesses and contemporary media as material. There is an optimism of such everydayness of the work for a general audience. But ultimately the purpose of such work is to piss on the aristocratic overclass supporting culture, while providing a micro-community for liberation and unity of the nomadic artistic elite. There is either a Gnostic bent or a deliberately anti-normative provocation involved directly in the work. This provides a space for communal structures within the alternative art world context. The use of high and low could exemplify an intuitionistic system of art as a topos or art as a category with varying functors in an a priori fibration specifying varying a posteriori interpretations. The hermeneutics of multivalent perspectives through a univalent foundation. This position potentially supports worldly Mind or Intellect.

6) The extinction of the world as presupposition. And the use of contemporary media as an allegory for such extinction, i.e. youth culture as virus. This position also pisses on the aristocratic overclass, but does not present any alternative space or community for liberation in the here-and-now as well as the future. The only hope is to live with this unfortunate presup. Political expediency is the rule. The formalization of the nihilism of individualism is the presup and basis for artwork. This position ostensibly formalizes the overclass as a means of pissing on the aristocracy, but only supports the individual in the end game.

These positions are not mutually exclusive.

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