

SPECTACLE, PSEUDO-MEANING AND INFANTILISATION

The Strategies employed by Artists in the Contemporary Art and Culture Industry
Controlling and Standardising / Homogenising Art that emerges in the Public Realm

Strategy 1 The contemporary art work illustrates one extremely simple thought by

being a **SPECTACLE** and / or by creating an **AIR OF GRAVITAS** for itself. It does this through:

A the total obliteration of any difference between art and everyday life / the total equation of every agent, object and activity with art

B political / social / sexual / news content

C reference to art from the past

audience: art professionals & general public
democratic / non-elitist / relatable / not intimidating
anyone can do it / 'get it' / judge it

B and C carry the meaning aspect of the role of art within the contemporary art discourse. An *air* of meaning, gravitas, autonomy and intellect is transferred to the contemporary work from B and C. A is driven by the demand for a democratisation of art, artist and audience. A has, seemingly once and for all, answered / abolished the question 'what is art?'. B, expressing the demand for political correctness, gained power as a consequence of A, but today outperforms A. The emotive spectacle of the themes of B is equated with gravitas and meaning. As a mere reference / sign for something embodying gravitas, these works are neither art nor 'real world' - they only *purport* to have meaning or efficacy as (political) agents in the real world. They have no *actual* efficacy, meaning or agency. Their 'pseudo-ness' / pseudo-efficacy and therefore (political) impotence, is an essential requirement, ensuring that the work continues to belong to the realm of art. The same logic is applied by museums which can today promote the superiority of reproductions of art works made in the past over the originals (now used as mere reference points) without attracting any criticism (Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam). The works' very impotence is the hallmark of the work belonging to the realm of art. This pseudo-efficacy and impotence are cemented into public consciousness as expressions of what 'political agency' and 'artistic freedom' look like. By declaring A, art of the present and the past *and* aspects of life have become impotent.

VISUAL / MATERIAL SPECTACLE ONLY is achieved through:

D many of the same object

E mega size of the art object or

F obscenely expensive materials

E / F are the contemporary / capitalist version of 'elitist' art; only those with success in the (art) world can make it.

'Pseudo-gravitas' and spectacle distract from the vacuity of the works.

Strategy 2 The contemporary art work illustrates one extremely simple thought by

being an empty **SPECTACLE** / **by explicitly NOT creating an AIR OF GRAVITAS** for itself. It does this through:

G the infantilisation of artist, art object and audience

H the explicit emphasis on the banal / entertainment / play / having fun / making a joke / being a clown etc

audience: general public / 'the masses'
democratic / non-elitist / relatable / not intimidating
anyone can do it / 'get it' / judge it

Strategy 2 is the culmination of strategy 1. These works do not purport to have meaning or efficacy and emphasise that the work looks simple and stupid intentionally. The art work is designed to function exactly like a joke, a playground or an Instagram background.

This strategy is promoted / produced by and of interest to major art institutions, galleries, museums as well as global art fairs and events, seeking to entertain and attract record visitor numbers and maximum media attention. Powered and justified by the ideology of A, strategy G and H provide content for consumption by 'the masses'. Art and leisure industry have here merged - a fact that the art industry distracts from through continued reference to C which bestows an *air* of cultivation and sophistication upon its followers. This industry's global success has developed hand in hand with city tourism, low budget flights, Air B&B and the impact of the nature of content circulation on the internet. Strategy 2 produces vast financial profit for large art institutions. Works shown in and thus sanctioned by these institutions have an increased market value and are consequently also of interest to individual investors. The industrial scale of the promotion of art as entertainment serves as a definition of what art is / what it is for. This definition is accepted globally.

The vacuity is treated as meaningful.

The all-pervading demand for a democratisation of art has led to the abolishment of the relevance of knowledge of art and art history, the abolishment of *autonomous* art, and of art as a discipline on the whole. Intellectual art-professional inquiry is deemed 'elitist' and thus suppressed. The contemporary Art- & Culture Industry exclusively requires, and has affected, the perpetual repetition and recycling of the above strategies - which explains the standardisation and stillstand in art over the last few decades. These strategies are today exported and accepted worldwide and represent a new form of colonialism, contributing to the effacement of local cultures and identities globally. Self-determination, autonomy and artistic freedom are suppressed, with dangerous consequences for a society's understanding of what freedom is or *looks like*.

A dangerous vacuum is created in the public realm.