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Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturwissenschaften

Christian Schulz / Jens Schröter / Christoph Ernst (Ed.)

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Jg. 23, H. 2, 2023

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IMPRESSUM

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REDAKTION FÜR DIESE AUSGABE:

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Christoph Ernst

UMSCHLAGGESTALTUNG UND LAYOUT:

Jasmin Kathöfer
(für diese Ausgabe)
Christoph Meibom und Susanne Pütz
(Originaldesign)

BILDER:

TITELBILD VORNE:

Boris Eldagsen, PSEUDOMNESIA III
(The Clairvoyant), promptography,
2023

TITELBILD HINTEN:

Boris Eldagsen, PSEUDOMNESIA III
(Evolution), promptography, 2023

DRUCK:

UniPrint, Universität Siegen

Erscheinungsweise zweimal jährlich

universi – Universitätsverlag Siegen
Am Eichenhang 50
57076 Siegen

Preis des Einzelheftes: € 13,-
Preis des Doppelheftes: € 22,-
Jahresabonnement: € 20,-
Jahresabonnement
für Studierende: € 14,-

ISSN 1619-1641

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The research on the futures of the internet was funded by the CAIS,
<https://www.cais-research.de>



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ART AND DESIGN VIS-À-VIS THE DIGITIZATION OF VITAL EXPERIENCE

HERNÁN BORISONIK

Design and technology are often associated, not without reason, with utility, whereas art is connected with an additional aim that goes beyond usufruct or efficiency. In fact, it is very common to see how artists appropriate technological tools to create works that do not have any immediate use. In that sense, the first artistic gesture would have occurred the day an inhabitant of the ancient Nile carved flint without the intention of making a blade or lighting a fire. Today we are faced with a virtual impossibility of (or opposition to) differentiating between art and design. In the face of this, it may be useful to underline the reasons why it is still worthwhile, on the one hand, to find the boundaries between them and, on the other, to investigate the channels that can reconcile the idea of art with that of utility, beyond the actual circumstances of creation and circulation.

Some 2,500 years ago, Aristotle said: “medicine, for instance, does not theorize about what will help to cure Socrates or Callias, but only about what will help to cure any or all of a given class of patients, [...] individual cases are so infinitely various that no systematic knowledge of them is possible” (*Rhetoric*, 1356b11). The singular, which Aristotle designates as “infinite,” is that which historically resisted generalization. Today, however, we are confronted with an infinite and unlimited juxtaposition of singulars that do not constitute a plural, that do not manage to link up under a general notion. Thus, words lose efficacy and meaning: Who is an artist today? What is it to be an artist?

In the classical Aristotelian conception, we find three forms of human knowledge (theoretical, practical, and technical), corresponding to three types of activity (respectively, these are contemplation, action, and production). What is central to this classification is that it raises a key question: what is the purpose of doing what is being done? To start from this question about purpose (the core meaning of Aristotelian political thought) is still very useful and clarifies potencies and modalities. Moreover, it is a fundamental question for thinking about the specific difference of *the human* by locating a form of being in the world linked to artificiality. For Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, 1032b1), a creation, something that was “made,” is a means to further ends, the first of which is its use. This assumes that everything we produce is intended to be used for something (which may be directly utilitarian, but also includes less tangible purposes such as being contemplated or venerated). Dialoguing with this idea, we can imagine that there is something useful in works of art (beyond their decorative, speculative, political, or even aesthetic uses) that has to do with the specific way of being in a world that entails human beings.

Beyond Aristotelian elucubrations and their infinite mediations and interpretations, we might come to the realization that while other animals do not consider their conditions of existence, we humans have thought of the environment as something alien and closed, in which we must intervene in order to survive. It is likely that this faculty is given by the lack of *natural tools* (claws, venom) other than our rational potential, reflected in the ability to account for our circumstances and actions in a codified way. The idea that human life is an *indigent* existence that must shape itself is found in José Ortega y Gasset (1962), who argued that humans are animals without a natural habitat, uncomfortable, and they must artificially transform the environment in order to subsist. Seen in this way, technology, politics, and philosophical contemplation are gradations within the same mode of existence dealing with the permanent need to modify the environment. Emanuele Coccia (2018) pointed out that this is not an exclusive characteristic of humanity, but that plants have been doing it for much longer and with powerful results. In fact, without the natural metamorphosis of the world by plants there would be no humanity, so in a way they bear some part of the responsibility for the artificial transformation of the planet by humans. However, it would be dangerous to relativize specific political responsibilities.

On the other hand, what we bequeath to subsequent generations is not exclusively through organic media, but also through specifically created backups – from images and stories to silicon memories. The quest to preserve certain experiences as a struggle to persist over time gravitates between two mutually permeable poles: the genetic and the artificial. For humankind, reliance on externalized media has been fundamental. The amount of information we want to preserve exceeds in magnitude and speed the possibilities of genes, so we invent exogenous ways of storing and communicating individual learning. Thus, the history of humankind has been punctuated by the permanent creation of second (and third) natures within (or against) which we can subsist. Without a doubt, a fundamental one is language. Starting with the Renaissance, but especially since what is referred to as the Scientific Revolution, the world began to be interpreted as a text, as a cipher that could be fully decoded. Early modern philosophy pursued the scientific ideal of being able to clarify and explain everything that exists. Then, the possibilities of philosophical speculation with language began to leave the world behind. At the same time, in the seventeenth century discourse itself began a process of liberation from things, which reached its climax roughly in the 1970s.

Art, for its part, is a perfect cipher of artificiality, insofar as it reconstructs something that is already given, which is the link between our individual life and life as a general form of existence. That is why art always has an agential edge, it always implies a certain actuation on the world as it was before the work. Art is one of the modalities or intensities that make up human life (at least in the declinations known so far) that cannot be completely captured or translated by rational discourse. Today it is particularly difficult to talk *about* art. In artistic circles people talk about capitalism, environmentalism, the Anthropocene, but not about

art. In the midst of the great epochal transformation in which we find ourselves, it has become very difficult to try to find a complete definition of art (or of almost anything else), not only due to perspectivism but also because of the enormous changes in the ways of imagining, creating, and perceiving artistic (and non-artistic) phenomena. However, far from giving up the quest to make a cutout, I am interested in engaging in a dynamic exploration that allows us to approach fruitful practices. Although today it seems absurd to propose an ultimate or universal definition of art, there is an area of our existence that affirms itself in a type of experience linked to the production and interaction with images (not only visual) and appeals to a type of enjoyment that is not identifiable or reducible to others. We cannot escape art, even if we cannot define it exhaustively. Yuk Hui argues:

“Art can address certain aspects of the universal, but one cannot invent a universal aesthetics, which can only exist as a philosophical postulate or a marketing slogan of the culture industry. The truth of art is that there is no formal truth per se, yet to commit to truth is to unveil those truths that are closed off or remain hidden in a desolate time.”
(Hui 2021, 287)

What is left of art, then? The sum of what all artists do? Abandoning categorical reflection would mean that artistic practices would surrender themselves to falling solely under the logic of capital and design (which, frequently, is already the case). We live under the mandate to continually produce and express things, under a form of dominance that has managed to capture and channel creative impulse. That is why we must think about the political matrix that constitutes a type of subjectivation that precedes any division between artists and public. Nowadays, the conditions under which works of art are created have an increasingly important bearing on how they are perceived. In the past, those who attained the social status of artists were considered special beings, inspired by the muses or divinities, channels of mediation through which the cosmos was expressed, interpreters of the sublime that exists in the world. That artist archetype concealed an enormous series of processes and people involved in the construction of the final pieces, which were, in the end, the central objects of the cultural universe. Conversely, a rather widespread style of artist today is that of a worldly individual who is witty and cunning (sometimes cynical) and who, in the absence of aids or tools, abuses his or her own biography to an inordinate degree. Of course there are notable exceptions to this standard, but even then the works are often surrounded by explanatory mediations and references.

As a counterpart, the exercise of art criticism no longer focuses on the works, but on their contexts. Thus, explanations about provenance (territorial, generational), belonging (to this or that collective), or the conflicts that the pieces cross and provoke are an ever-present feature in texts and professional reviews. Current criticism points more to the tensions of those who produce than of what

is produced, which is reduced to the object of an archive or a commemorative landmark, but which speaks little on its own. As Rancière pointed out, “in the aesthetic age, the critical text no longer says what the painting should be or should have been. It says what it is or what the painter has done” (2007, 78). What a remarkable difference this is compared to the value system expressed almost a century ago by Ezra Pound: “you can spot the bad critic when he starts by discussing the poet and not the poem” (1991, 84).

One of the fundamental steps on the road to this cutback to the individual was taken by the Society of Independent Artists, founded (among others) by Marcel Duchamp, who submitted his famous *Fountain* for the first exhibition in 1917 under the pseudonym Richard Mutt. When the jury rejected his work, Duchamp resigned from the association and said that what was important about the work was not whether it had been produced by the artist's hands, but that *he has chosen it* (Camfield 1987, 38). In this act, in addition to founding contemporary art (according to some readings), Duchamp centered artistic creation on the almost omnipotent figure of the author. So what is a work of art and what is it to be an artist after the death of God? Such a question is of particular relevance in this age in which it is very difficult to draw a clear boundary between artists and designers, or between art and design, because the idea of “original” becomes ungraspable, and no longer only because of the possibilities offered by the technical reproducibility that Walter Benjamin enunciated in 1936. Today, the materiality of art has changed radically, paintings are digitized and pixels are sold, tokenized, at Sotheby's. When the aura ceased to be the characteristic of artworks, the spotlight shifted to the artists. For some time now, those who dedicate themselves to contemporary art have been involved in tasks of (self-) design, a labor that robs lots of time and effort in the service of potential buyers, patrons, and subsidiaries. In that sense, design is the reverse of art, it is the form that things take on when they seek to be seductive and effective. If art's impacts cannot be calculated, design seeks to control and stabilize them.

Charlotte Klonk (2009) observed that, during the twentieth century, museums gradually shifted the construction of their visitors from seeing them as *citizens* to educated *consumers*. And even when institutions did not entirely cease to fulfill social functions, they introduced very perceptible changes in the way they displayed and informed their exhibitions, focusing on the individual experience of each visitor. Meanwhile, Instagram – the current mecca of engaging design – is a virtual and personalized space, where the main and almost sole purpose is to hold the attention of its users for as long as possible in an eternal scroll in order to learn more about their desires. This reduces the potential of images to their power of commodification and maximizes the possibility of exploiting the free labor (creative, cognitive, and also mechanical) of those who use this platform.

Today, artists and non-artists alike are involved in a speculative game with the gaze of others. That implies, among other things, a dramatic decline in the capacity to question abusive practices and situations in a democratic way. According

to Marcuse (1964; 1966), technological advances within the matrix of the capitalist system, far from being improvements in favor of emancipation, can, on the contrary, reinforce the bonds of domination. The low-intensity democratization of the media has provided for a regime of total surveillance and algorithmic governance of images and bodies. One of its consequences is the ease with which it is now possible to exclude what is unpleasant from view, without trying to build common ground on differences, which opens the door to enormous manipulation by the few actors who manage to set agendas and suggest behaviors.

Today's unbridled consumerism and unmitigated self-design are undoubtedly related to the abandonment of art as a transformative power. As Boris Groys (2010) summarized, the only possible manifestation of the soul begins to be appearance. The exhaustion of the model of the world as a complete and apprehensible unity had effects on the possibilities of searching for truth. No longer conceiving of an ultimate foundation, a solidly verified statement can be as valid as a prejudice based on personal experience. In this context, truth is accepted as a psychological experience (or, at most, one shared by several subjects), which art can document or record, but not necessarily produce. Thus, truth and lies have taken on a sense that is effectively extra-moral, but the opposite of what Nietzsche (2015) mentioned in 1873 in one of the most inspiring and potent texts to emerge among from critics of the modern project. Today everything is true (because it exists) and nothing is true (because it exists in language). Rouvroy and Berns (2013) explained, with regard to "algorithmic governmentality," that the automated functions that replace statistics are no longer concerned with synthesizing an average among all the data, but with accounting for the simultaneous existence of all the exemplars. This makes the possibility of lies obsolete, since everything that arises (even the false) participates to some degree in the construction of reality.

In "The Truth of Art," Boris Groys (2016) reflects on the link between art and truth in the contemporary world. There, he shows how fundamental this question is for the existence and survival of art, because if art cannot be a medium of truth, it is reduced to a matter of taste, and then the producer is subjected to the spectator (who today is ultimately an algorithm for commercial purposes) and art loses its independence or potency. Art thereby becomes identical to design, Groys claims. In contrast, if art still has any relation to truth, it can somehow modify the world. And how it attempts to do so depends, in turn, on how art is understood: as ideology or as technology (i.e., as something that can move by *persuasion* or by *accommodation*). From the first perspective, art seeks to "capture the imagination and change people's consciousness." This presupposes that there is a message and that it is possible to circulate it, which has proven to be very ineffective in aesthetic terms. Moreover, works that are widely accepted by the public are dismissed as conventional, banal, or commercial by the art establishment. From the second perspective, the aim is to change the world through the production of things under an altered use of technology, or by modifying the

sense in which the public interacts with the environment. This view also has polemical overtones. Even Heidegger, who believed that art can reveal a state of the world, understood that the works are quickly reconverted into ordinary, closed objects. Still, Groys points out that this situation has changed in recent decades, as the Internet has become the place where art production and exhibition occur simultaneously. For artists and institutions, the Internet functions as a space of self-representation. But for algorithms, it is the person *underneath* the artist that is of interest. Then, any form of *being* on the Internet is analogous. Circulating art or food pictures are part of the same scene in which cultural productions are converted into *content* and equated as such. What is crucial, from the platforms' point of view, is to capture attention for as long as possible and to be able to interpret the interests, desires, and needs of each user to sell targeted advertising. Identity thus becomes a question of power: Who defines me? And who defines the classification criteria?

In the twenty-first century, access to certain technologies that allow anyone who wishes to do so to produce images with ease has been greatly democratized. As a result, there are many more people producing and sharing images than there are people interested in looking at them. However, the results seem to be increasingly monopolized in their use. As Silvia Schwarzböck pointed out:

(public and private) institutions that currently make up the circuit of artistic consecration control the way in which culture develops [...], even when more and more artists bet on freeing themselves from their tutelage and use Internet to replace their mediations, because Internet ironically replicates them by initiating outside the public-private-official circuit the insertion of artists in that same circuit. Today, finally, the omnipresence of the market has become more ominous (more invisible) than that of the state. (Schwarzböck 2013)

At the same time, the virtualization of the commonplace (which has been extremized, but not created, by the limitation to physical contact or *social distance* due to Covid-19) has intensified the demand to generate *content*, through forming and sharing images via digital platforms. Thus, each individual becomes a permanent content producer but also an object that seeks to attract others. With this, *artist*, *designer*, and *laborer* are practically undifferentiated. They all translate into virtual persons obliged to show themselves and be consumed. Today, in the face of the almost automatic conversion of every cultural object into digital content, the arts are subsumed to design and particularly to useless design (whose ultimate purpose is to increase capital). But regardless of how an activity, a work or its maker is (self-) denominated, it is possible to distinguish between technical and artistic operations. Of course, this is a separation that can sometimes seem forced and has a myriad of nuances, but in the end, it is worth making the effort and exploring those boundaries.

Design has indisputably changed the conditions of our lives. And, in fact, that is always its purpose (Axel et al. 2018). Because it serves external causes, design has finality, but it is never final and can always be used to modify the existing to create new things. Indeed, as Jussi Parikka (2015) demonstrated, the ordered use of matter makes design a function that can unite incredibly distant temporalities and geographies. Why, then, would one speak of *useless design* if what defines design is precisely that it serves a purpose? Firstly, because, alongside the great advances in many fields, from medicine to alternative energies, there are entire branches of contemporary design and technology that are devoted exclusively to exercising some degree of manipulation for the benefit of a small elite and not for the betterment of life in general. During the twentieth century, design achieved unprecedented centrality and refinement and aided great advances in issues that are very sensitive to the lives we are living. The conflict is that, nevertheless, this progress was carried out from a matrix that responds to an intensive quantification and commodification will. In other words, there are techniques, such as tel-marketing, that may “serve a purpose,” but are still harmful and, contrary to any theory of technology, they do not modulate the environment in order to inhabit it collectively.

Moreover, as Bratton argues:

from the Vitruvian Man to Facebook profiles, centuries of ‘human-centered design’ (HCD) have brought more usable tools, but in many important domains design is far too psychologizing, individuating, and anthropocentric without being nearly humane enough. When raised to a universal principle, HCD also brought landfills of consumer goods, social media sophistry, and an inability to articulate futures beyond narrow clichés. (2019, 43)

Every technology and every design emerges in a productive matrix that leaves its traces beyond the concrete wills involved in each use.

Design can certainly not be reduced to its use for merchandise styling. It has also brought about remarkable improvements ranging from replacing organs and restoring limbs to economic planning. Let us not forget that the Bauhaus and similar movements were part of one of the most real and impactful avant-garde programs of the twentieth century, with ideas of design that sought to improve the lives of majorities. Today, however, we find a widespread use of design to the detriment of its recipients, as well as a virtual dependence on self-design as a method of appearing in the eyes of others. Also, as a counterbalance, there is an army of artists permanently subjected to design-for-the-market, agreeing (either willingly or out of necessity) to contribute to the exploitation of the planet and its inhabitants. So, while the arts were characterized by somehow transcending techniques (by freeing themselves from immediate utility and by the possibility of making non-predefined use of the material with which they operated), today they tend to subsume themselves to the logic of the neoliberal matrix. Complemen-

tarily, there are views that seek to highlight the creative angle of design as a possibility for new imaginations and practices. There are design proposals from political perspectives that seek to go beyond the imperative of value centered on the capitalist commodity. Damian White (2015), for example, highlights the planetary risks (both social and environmental) facing us in the current design based on a hyper-consumer economy that operates under absolutely short-term imperatives of valorization. However, he also highlights some efforts that aim to reorient design practices towards collaborative, cooperative, and vital formats, using free software and democratic rules.

Be that as it may, and beyond the positive view of a type of design that enhances creativity, imagination, and openness to new forms of life, design is ontologically limited by its programming and by its purpose, which is to obtain a useful result for some previously determined end, while art is not. From the point of view of design, physical or symbolic materials are thought of as the potential of (and resistance to) that which is to be carried out. Whereas in art, even this resistance can be viewed as something favorable to the works.

Hal Foster (2002) made an important contribution to this question. It is worth taking a close look at his arguments. His starting point is a debate that is more than a century old. Foster gives a contemporary reading of the sayings of Adolf Loos, an advocate of the staunch separation between utility and decoration. In 1900, Loos allegorically mocked “a poor little rich man” who asked a representative of Art Nouveau to design his house by putting “art into each and every thing” (Loos 1900, in Sarnitz 2003, 18–9), convinced that he would succeed in infusing his personality into every detail, expressing himself as an individual through objects, that is, objectifying himself. Loos’s major complaint was that this subject-object seemed to be complete and finished, that is to say, it pursued (like its designer) a kind of extinction of life, which paradoxically banished any allusion to death. This foreclosure of finitude was, for Loos, a veritable catastrophe. Foster also revisited the arguments of *Ornament and Crime*, a 1908 book in which Loos unleashed his irritation against ornamental design, denouncing it as a kind of civilizational involution and an anti-sublimation act (long before the criticisms that, in a similar vein, some Frankfurters would deploy against the technification of life). All that Loos and his anti-decorative puritanism stood for was long condemned when modernism revealed itself to be monstrous and deadly. However, Foster argues that, without necessarily adopting Loos’ ideas to their full extent, it is useful to revisit them today: “maybe times have changed again; maybe we are in a moment when distinctions between practices might be reclaimed or remade without the ideological baggage of purity and propriety attached” (Foster 2002, 14).

As we can see, the confusion or blurring distinction between use value and artistic value is not a new topic. However, the debate around this issue acquires a new resonance in this era in which:

the aesthetic and the utilitarian are not only conflated but all but subsumed in the commercial, and everything – not only architectural pro-

jects and art exhibitions but everything from jeans to genes – seems to be regarded as so much design [...]. [Therefore] when you thought the consumerist loop could get no tighter in its narcissistic logic, it did: design abets a near-perfect circuit of production and consumption, without much ‘running-room’ for anything else. (Foster 2002, 17–18)

As a result, design seems to have colonized creativity in all areas of life (from make-up to procreation, drugs, or food), all cultural strata (generations, socio-economic classes, geographies), and all scales (from the self to the governance and control of populations and biomes on a planetary level).

Hand in hand with the expansion of advertising, commodity fetishism became the prevailing logic, the universal *lingua franca*, through the mysterious combination of an apparent constant innovation and a simplification of communication (associated with a permanent exploitation of attention, which always ends up being deficient). In this process, the breakdown of the dualism between the “producing subject” and the “produced object” was fundamental. Today, the capacity for adaptation and customization of mass products both erases and affirms the individuality of those who consume. It also, however, affirms the individuality of those who produce, under the reduction of human activity to what is referred to as “prosumption” (Lang et al., 2020), a consumption that produces value for others. Recall that not only companies, but also academic and artistic institutions have begun to look to graphic design for their “brand identities,” which ultimately equate them with marketable products. The image of prosumption is very useful to understand the structure of this era in which the consumption of immaterial goods is increasingly overwhelming. Indeed, while the industrial *haute bourgeoisie* had an interest in forming the taste of populations, contemporary powers prefer to encourage the realist-capitalist imagination by infinitely modifying, editing, and re-designing products that can respond to the instantaneous desires of those who simultaneously consume and produce value. For even if social creativity is limitless, the possibilities of individual imagination collide with bodies (starting with one’s own) and their contours delineated by the social matrix in which they are immersed.

Returning to Foster, contemporary design’s fantasy is to integrate by erasing, it is to deterritorialize image and space by detaching them from their references and structural principles. In this way, design advances more quickly and efficiently towards transdisciplinarity than any university or artistic collective, through the path of capital. It replaces sublimation lines with precarious narcissistic fixations devoid of interiority, resulting in a society that wearily treads a narrow path between anxiety and frustration, mania and depression.

Having reached this point, one might wonder whether there is not a hint of utility in all artistic expressions, from the abstract to the figurative, from the most lucrative to the most unseen, from the most impenetrable to the most popular: all of them. For that, it is necessary to dive into the less historical characteristics of humans and ask ourselves what differentiates us from other forms of life. Perhaps

the question lies not so much in the specific qualitative difference (which is what has tended to be done: “rational animal,” “political being,” “moral creature,” “creative being,” etc.) as in the magnitude: we are not the only animal that exercises reason, we are not the only being with aesthetic inclinations, we are not the only entity that modifies its environment as a form of existence, but the one that does these things together and quantitatively more. As I suggested earlier, these characteristics result in a sense of discomfort with reality as it is immediately presented to us. If there were a degree zero of inhabiting the world (which would be a situation of total comfort with the environment), it would probably be linked to the simplest and most automatic conformations of existence. As life forms become more complex, they also become more uncomfortable, reaching, in the human case, a life that is inseparable from the need to artificially modify its circumstances.

If we are an animal that has to transform its immediate conditions in order to inhabit the world, art is part of that need and therefore it is also useful, then it is also something that is done for a purpose, it is part of the orthopedics that we naturally apply to our environment. The Anthropocene (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000) would be then nothing but a misstep in that history (“misstep” because it transformed the environment to a point where our very subsistence is at risk), but not an entirely disruptive event. In other words, it would be a lousy way of doing what is invariable and inevitable for our species. Yet, the above should not cloud the fact that commodified art, along with biopolitics and modern scientific paradigm which emerged several centuries ago, is not a necessary part of what has characterized humanity for as long as it has existed, but the specific layer that resulted from mathematicizing and commodifying everything that exists. The drive to accumulate and increase money, which is behind all commodification, makes profit the end of all actions.

Nevertheless, there are those who, like Adorno, have seen in modern art emancipatory potentialities; who have seen in the very existence of works of art the possibility of rediscovering the critical gesture, the question that seeks to transform as a necessity in order to inhabit. The artwork, then, is a chance of remitting to that lost world, covered by capital and data, in which the conversion of everything that exists into a resource for the profit that capitalism produces. Artworks’ counterpart is the withdrawal or inhibition of the world of art as a transformer of the vital experience. If the political is, as Chantal Mouffe (2006) says, the dimension of antagonism and hostility that exists in human relations, and politics is the arena in which such tensions are institutionalized, ordered, and organized, is it possible to have art that allows itself to be traversed by the political without submitting to politics?

As long as we continue to discuss ownership and authorship in modern, capitalist terms, there will not really be a space for thinking about art outside that framework. Faced with the commercial convenience of some things being sold as *works of art*, with what operations, with what mediations can one intervene? The

question about art is relevant (it helps, among other things, to think about what can be asked of it). Differentiating it from design is also relevant. The difficulty in distinguishing art and design today is clear and has to do with the fact that both activities are imbricated within a matrix that means that sooner or later everything ends up as merchandise. Faced with the current indistinction between art and design that *delegitimizes* art and a culture that needs to make everything equivalent in order to be interchangeable, what art can enable ways of relating to the equalizing standard that help us to live better? How can we escape the logic of critique of critique? How can we rehabilitate a dissent that is not reabsorbed by the algorithmic effectiveness of financial capitalism?

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ABSTRACTS

HERNÁN BORISONIK: ART AND DESIGN VIS-À-VIS. THE DIGITIZATION
OF VITAL EXPERIENCE

This article explores how boundaries between art and design have become increasingly blurred in the digital age, the changing materiality of art, how artists are increasingly involved in tasks of self-design in the service of potential buyers, patrons, and subsidiaries or even taken as free labor on social media platforms. These topics are connected through the consideration of the exhaustion of the model of the world as a complete and apprehensible unity and the purpose of human activity world that entails human beings. The text also maintains that exploitation of cognitive labour is linked to the enormous manipulation by the few actors who manage to set agendas and suggest behaviours. The text has a pendulum-like shape and winds its way through polarities until it finally suggests that there is a hint of utility in all artistic expressions by reconciling the idea of art with utility.

MARTIN DOLL: THE SPECTERS OF (SOCIOTECHNICAL) IMAGINARIES.
OPPRESSED FUTURES OF THE PAST

In my article I want to argue for a shift in focus in Media Studies when thinking about sociotechnical imaginaries, a concept prominently developed by Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim. Whereas this concept is often used to think in rather sociological large scales—a society, a culture as a whole—I would like to provide a more humanities-specific small-scale approach with a strong emphasis on heterogeneities and ambivalences and with a focus on sociotechnical imaginaries from the past. First, I will elaborate on the (political) blind spots of thinking in rather large-scales (even if this is sometimes only implicitly articulated in the key sources). Second, I will develop a sketch of a methodology for analyzing sociotechnical imaginaries on a smaller scale by reference to the concept of »memory cultures«, and particularly to »storage memory« and »functional memories« founded by Aleida Assmann and further developed in terms of pluralities by Astrid Erll. And, third, I will outline the political implications of this media archaeology of sociotechnical imaginaries in the present. Can we understand these imaginaries with Derrida as specters that haunt us, as specters of past political futures connected to media technologies that remind us of what is no longer and what is not yet?

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