

## Introduction

This issue interleaves academic essays with creative work in a number of forms, and presents work produced in several countries, including our first submission from Hungary. It covers both philosophical and practical implications of the theme of art and the market with reflections on topics as diverse as the museum, film, television, and literature, and illustrates aesthetic practice in clay sculpture, poetry, architecture and photography.

One of the ironies of the English language is the divergence between the meaning of two terms which might have been near-synonyms, “worthless” and “priceless.” The polarisation of their meanings reflects the indeterminacy of the concept of value, on which so many of our social interactions nonetheless are predicated. Inescapably a matter of subjectivity. In art, in particular, individual subjective evaluation is clearly the bottom line, even though collective evaluations may be culturally authoritative. A designation of “masterpiece” is powerless when faced with the individual’s firm “I just don’t like it.” However, the authority of the real commodity value which follows such a designation as masterpiece tends to temper individual

difference than we might have expected is now seventy years since Walter Benjamin wrote his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" which examined the implications of the move away from the traditional privileging of the unique artefact which new technologies afforded. He argued that "the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice politics." However, we have come to see that ritual and politics are not mutually exclusive, and history shows that the new technologies have not much dented the value of authenticity. In his 1990 work *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* Terry Eagleton, discussing Lukács, reveals our ironic distance from Benjamin's postulate: "the absence of socialism, then, it will prove necessary to make do with art."

In our time global capitalism has, despite the bursting of the dot bubble, been surprisingly successful in bending the market to the aesthetic potential of even new technologies. Since artists are usually involved in commodity production of some kind, the idea of value and the will to produce something saleable are hard to avoid. The slide (down, some might say) between the concept of value and that of monetary value is one which our culture tends to elide. Art is situated between use value and exchange value, like other commodities. Increasingly the power of monetary discourses subsumes the other possibilities residing within the notion of value. Yet the realm of art understood broadly as a range of aesthetic practices from the "pure" to the "applied" stubbornly resists, or at least complicates, the hegemony of money, while inescapably depending on the patron's shilling: the imperative need for an income (at whatever point in the chain of production and consumption it can be secured) may be resented but it is hard to ignore.

Since art largely consists of artefacts, it is inevitably bound up with the social mediation of commodities. Nonetheless, although the prehistoric origins of art



less than the rationality of exchange value, the illusion of the “cosy marriage of human subjectivity and market objectivity” should be ~~over~~red, but the paradoxical crux is that

the shape of human heads, but in the figure of Pachamama, earthmother in Quechua, which recurs in Warmi's anthropomorphic pots. The feminine is central and sensual: to caress the skin of these pots is a pleasure. But she refers us also to the awareness in her culture that new life begins in the dark. She says, the interior of a vessel is as important as its outside. Some of her works have a smooth, unglazed exterior surface but a glazed inner surface. The point is both artistic and practical: the glaze lends strength. The two-handled pot based on traditional waterpots is a reminder of the strength of people who would carry such pots on their backs long distances, full of water. The knob to hold the ropes, the lip at the base to lift it from, are both functional and beautiful. Talking to Warmi produces a lively sense of the inherent ambiguities in the work, as in the human experience from which it springs. She names her work, in the names near the base of the pots, so language, Quechua tongue, is an inherent part of her art. In the composition another and child figure, made up of five pots slotted together, each of which is a useful vessel on its own, the name introduces a tension between the mother and the child, thus engaging with the dynamic of generations, history, and responsibility. For while the pot representing the head of the child held on its mother's back is still, the name of the piece animates it: it translates as Earthmother with Naughty Child. The name of another pot includes the term unquq which means "pregnant" in Quechua, as well as "fed up" and "fat". Warmi has recently begun to work also in textiles, dyeing and making knotted wool quipus, the traditional Andean system of using knots and colours to record numerical data. She is particularly interested in experimenting with the use of quipus as a semiology not just for number but for language. Research is the essential starting point to her work, as she studies the traditions in all their philosophical and

technical complexity, but while she begins from traditional ~~debris~~ she takes these forward into an art of great beauty and originality. Many of today's crude and superficial approximations of Andean art forms anger her, as a betrayal both of the fineness and intelligence of past work, whether defined as art or craft, and of the creative responsibilities of the artist now. The challenge represented by the relationship of traditional cultures to present production is brought forcefully into focus by what Warmi makes and believes. An exhibition of her work opens in London in March 2006, reminding us of the inescapable mediation of exhibiting, the bridge between the creator and her public, including potential patrons

The womanist aesthetics of Warmi are followed by ~~the~~ distinctively masculinist ones of Robert Mapplethorpe. Dorothy Barenscott's essay is illustrated by some of Mapplethorpe's photographs and by other images from the social contexts which they negotiate, as they are represented through the documentary *Dirty Pictures*, dramatising the history of the 1990 Mapplethorpe exhibition in Cincinnati, *The Perfect Moment*, the subsequent obscenity trial. The controversial airing of this film on cable television in 2000 is the essay's starting point, from which it arcs back over the complex cultural history to which Mapplethorpe's art has been subjected. Questions of censorship and taboo to do with sexuality and representation are discussed in other contexts too. Examining the new topographies of power, Barenscott concludes that there are increasingly permeable borders between art and economic interests, and calls for exhibition directors to create spaces where "one can look beyond the strictly formal and sensational to confront, head on, the social and political."

Marc Schuster's essay on Don DeLillo's first novel, *Americana*, reads it as exploring "the viability of life outside the grip of consumer culture and, by extension, beyond the logic of value that regulates the language of that culture." In the novel, Schuster argues, "David's interests in Zen philosophy and consumer culture combine to form an amalgam that is remarkably similar to Baudrillard's critique of the sign in a conflicted, schizoid culture, the terms of difference collapse into versions of the same. Ultimately the opposition the novel portrays is not between art and commerce, DeLillo and Baudrillard, or even ideology and its opposite. It is between David and David, America and America."

Jennifer Kehoe's short poem "Beige Paper" is a wry comment on the predicament of the writer as a producer whose monetary value has collapsed. Here the "not for sale" label is deployed to exclude the artist from her just deserts. That non-monetary exchange values can function as unfai-10(f 0 Td k-2)3(sd.75(o(i)d.75(o(i-7(ei)-4(r)-1(

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possibility of programming that is challenging in any way to the dominant view of the

