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Paul Melton

"I'll Be Your Mirror": Cultural Studies and / as Art Market Studies

Art Market Studies is a necessarily interdisciplinary field of inquiry, as the combination of "art" with "market" brings together spheres of being and knowing that are often (if, indeed, problematically) contrasted with and opposed to each other. While early work in our field tended to be situated within, more than across, disciplinary boundaries – primarily art history (e.g., Baxandall), economics (e.g., Anderson), and sociology (e.g., Bourdieu) – those boundaries have since become much more porous, generating rich exchanges among scholars. Their work is now welcomed by multiple discipline-specific journals (e.g., De Marchi and Van Miegroet have published in both *The Art Bulletin* and *History of Political Economy*) and by students, whose syllabi routinely include key texts from outside their chosen discipline (e.g., the graduate seminars this author took in art history were as diverse in their reading as those he took in media studies). With this issue of the *Journal for Art Market Studies*, we seek to advance the field's interdisciplinary development by turning our attention to fictitious representations of the art market and, in so doing, creating dialogue with the manifold field of cultural studies.

Portrayals of the art market have so far received scant scholarly inquiry from either cultural studies or art market studies. Within popular culture, perhaps, the art market has been too narrow (or too protected?) a niche to attract much cultural studies attention while also being too far from "the real thing" to merit analysis by art historians or cultural social scientists concerned with the art market. This issue seeks to make a case for the importance of paying attention to these cultural forms and rigorously analyzing them to further our understanding of the art market. Not only does such inquiry share the epistemological concerns of our founding fields of art history and social science – with their emphasis on the politics and ethics of representation, as well as the explanatory and predictive power of modeling – but it builds on a rich tradition of scholarship, especially the critiques of the Frankfurt School (e.g., Adorno and Horkheimer) and the later Birmingham School (e.g., Hall, Williams), as well as more recent work in Science and Technology

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Studies (e.g., Haraway, Keller), sociology (e.g., Callon, MacKenzie), and economics (e.g., Shiller). Of acute interest (and, admittedly, inspiration) for this issue is the interdisciplinary work on cultures of finance represented by, for example, Haiven's *Cultures of Financialization: Fictious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, La Berge's *Scandals and Abstractions: Financial Fiction of the Long 1980s*, McClanahan's *Dead Pledges: Debt, Crisis, and Twenty-First-Century Culture*, and Tygstrup's "Finance Fiction – Financialization and Culture in the Early 21st Century" project at the University of Copenhagen. In analyzing representations of the art market in popular media, this issue shares the concerns and approaches of these various fields in a spirit similar to that of Consumer Culture Theory: "Consumer culture theorists read popular culture texts… as lifestyle and identity instructions that convey unadulterated marketplace ideologies… and idealized consumer types… highlight[ing] the creative and sophisticated ways in which consumers critically reinterpret media and advertising ideals and ideological inducements… as interpretive agents."[1]

Re-presenting the Art Market

Michael Hutter leads this issue with "Three Views of a Saleroom: Valorization in and valuation of visual artworks by (mostly) Watteau, Altman, and Banksy," plumbing three representations of sites of artistic-commercial exchange to explore the symbiotic and parasitic relationships between different spheres of valuation and different processes of valorization. Juxtaposing a painting, a film, and a performance (that also became both a film and an image), Hutter deftly contrasts the changing conditions of production and reception of these works and brings attention to the value-generating effects of historicization, mediation, and negation. Artistic value and commercial value, so often pitted against each other at the moment of production only to be reconciled (or synthesized) at some later moment of reception, are, as Hutter argues, also bound up in questions of political value, which raises important directions for further analysis.

Valuation and valorization are equally central to Nick Pearce's analysis of literary representations of the early twentieth century market for Chinese art in "'Twice as Valuable as that of Eumorphopulos and twice as famous…' (Vita Sackville-West, *All Passion Spent*, 1931) – The Real and Imaginary World of the Chinese Art Collector." Pearce weaves together the biographies of the actual collectors and the details of their fictional counterparts to analyze the position of Chinese art (and its market participants) in the cultural imaginary of the time. As Pearce argues, these narratives reflect historical shifts in the market, such as the turn from later period porcelain to more ancient artifacts, and the pivotal role played by collectors in producing the art historical knowledge that drives market valuation. The concerns animating these narratives feel remarkably relevant almost a century after their publication—the globalization of the art market, the inter-

1 Eric J. Arnould and Craig J. Thompson, Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research. in: *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 4 (March 2005), 868–82, 875. (https://doi.org/10.1086/426626).

nationalization of the collector class, and the interplay between private collections and public institutions.

These present concerns are vividly manifest in the rich array of film and television portrayals of the art market that Claudia Quiñones has assembled for "Through a Screen, Darkly: Exploring audiovisual media representations of the art market from 2008 to the present." Surveying these depictions created since the 2008 financial crisis, Quiñones notes a general tendency by which the art market, figured as space devoid of ethical norms and / or regulatory controls, functions as a cipher for animus toward the "1 percent" and distrust of authority. Central to these negative depictions is the instrumentalization of art, whether for social gain or illicit profit, emphasizing the parasitic relationship between commercial (or social) value and artistic value while excluding any possible symbiotic relationships. That one-sidedness, in addition to registering socioeconomic tensions, reflects a more structural, narrative tension between mystification and representation, between the exceptionality of the aesthetic and the mundanity of the comprehensible, between competing forms of truth – a struggle most starkly illustrated in the documentary features about forgery with which the article concludes.

The status of truth in art – rendered in terms of "authenticity," "originality," and, ultimately, "value" – links the two films examined in Schon's "(Con)Artistic Strategies for How to Succeed in the Art Market." Almost four decades separate Orson Welles' *F Is For Fake*, which profiles renowned forger Elmyr de Hory, and Banksy's *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, which features a dubious Thierry Guetta, allowing Schon to explore their philosophical and cinematic continuities as well as the art market's historical transformations. Like the forger's art, street art is a contemporary creation, but while forged art's value is drawn from a fictional past, street art's (commercial) value is drawn from a speculative future. Unlike the connoisseurs fooled by de Hory, whose expertise was based on the examination of historical records and technical details, the contemporary art advisor's (or investor-collector's) expertise is based on anticipation of future trends. Between the two films, then, the role of expertise shifts from cultivating taste for appreciation (as knowledge of the past coupled with aesthetic sensibility) to generating buzz / hype for investment (as desire for consumption that guides purchasing behavior in the advisor's interest). Credibility is, thus, a key concern for both the street artists and street art collectors, albeit in two very different senses: whereas "street cred(it, -ibility)" for graffiti artists is based on market opposition, credibility for the art advisor / collector is based on market participation, specifically the future market participation that secures the work's investment potential.

The means of production – of art, of knowledge, of truth, and of value – are central to Jeffrey Taylor's analysis of "Art Forgers and the Deconstruction of Genius." Beginning with forensic authentication's radical challenge to connoisseurship's authority in adjudicating authenticity, which entered the popular imagination through the Duveen trial and was soon memorialized in both a play and a novel, Taylor focuses on the career of Elmyr de Hory, putting forth a persuasive case for considering de Hory's life "one of the most

deconstructive conceptual artworks of the twentieth century… [a] profound attack on the art market's prioritization of geniuses and the opinions of experts… a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of artifice, and one that inspired multiple followers." Taylor's detailed analysis of that chain of influence – forgers all the way down! – and its destabilizing impact on both art history and the art market highlights the contingency inherent in the art world's sociology of knowledge and, with it, authority. The political implications of such deconstruction of genius with its concomitant destabilization of authority and displacement of affect over fact – so elegantly crystallized, as Taylor highlights, by art forger Ziegler in *The Simpsons*, "The only question to ask is… Did it move you?" – has not entirely realized the liberatory promise envisioned by Barthes and others (quite the contrary, recently), but we can, and must, keep that hope alive.

We hope, too, that this issue will generate more dialogue between art market studies and cultural studies. During the time we've been working on this issue, cross-overs between the art world and pop culture seem to have become more frequent in the art industry press as well as in national periodicals. Of course, confirmation bias may be at work on this author's own perception, but, as Quiñones has so thoroughly documented, art-related feature films, documentaries, and television series (not to mention podcasts!)—whether taking the art world / market as their subject or using it prominently for character or narrative development – have proliferated significantly over the last decade. This introduction closes by examining one of Bravo's early forays into art world reality television, *Gallery Girls*.

Gallery Girls: The Art Market, Labor, and Reality Television

At the start of the 2010s, the "gallerina" seemed to have a firm grip on the popular imagination. In *The New Yorker*, comedienne Mindy Kaling lists the "Woman Who Works in an Art Gallery" as one of seven romantic comedy-specific "specimens of women who – like Vulcans or Mothra – do not exist in real-life" but appear frequently in television and film.[2] For her, this character is favored by the genre because it is "posh/smart/classy" and accessible ("guys don't really get it, but it's likeable and nonthreatening").[3] That same month, *Vogue* published a breathless profile of fourteen "Gagosiennes," introduced by a glamourous two-page portrait and the text: "Behind Larry Gagosian's global art brand is a fleet of high-powered women directors".[4] This new figure of female labor had become so prominent that the next year, pop culture blog *Flavorwire* proclaimed, "The gallerina is everywhere. Over the past several years, the female art gallery assistant has subtly

2 Mindy Kaling, Flick Chicks, in *The New Yorker*. Accessed 14 July 2020. (https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/10/03/flick-chicks).

3 Ibid.

4 Dodie Kazanjian, Gagosiennes, in *Vogue*, 1 October 2011. 911906682. The Vogue Archive, 347. These women, despite their cosmopolitan backgrounds, display little, if any, ethnic diversity.

slipped herself into a host of rom-coms, Candace Bushnell-esque chick lit, and sitcoms about independent women trying to make it in the big city. Now, the stock character is getting her own reality show."[5]

That reality show was Bravo's *Gallery Girls*, a "doc-series that follows the lives of seven dynamic and ambitious young women in New York City who tackle the cutthroat environment of the art world while vying for their dream jobs." The show was Bravo's second venture into portraying the art world in a reality television format, after the reality competition *Work of Art: American's Next Great Artist* (whose decline in viewership over two seasons lead to its cancellation a week after *Gallery Girls*' premiere).[6] Set in New York and running for eight episodes, *Gallery Girls* was something of a cross between *The Hills,* with its semi-scripted docu-soap take on young women starting their careers, and *Sex and the City*, with its emphasis on fabulous female friendship (and rivalry) in the big city. The show's drama draws on all facets of the women's lives, as they attend events ranging "[f]rom art shows to gallery openings to the hottest events in the city" while "attempting to juggle a chic and fabulous standard of living" and "tackl[ing] financial struggles, family issues, and the pressures of jump starting their lives in the city that never sleeps".[7] For four of the cast, "jump starting their lives" means pursuing internships at galleries and art advisories while the other three pursue entrepreneurial ventures (two started a boutique-cum-gallery called "End of Century" while the other launches her photography career); three of the four interns benefit from generous parental support or trust funds while the other intern, like the aspiring photographer, works an additional job to support herself. Represented almost entirely by commercial sites and entities, the art world is, for the show's purposes, tantamount to the art market in serving as the backdrop of the women's bonding and bickering. As the show traverses these sites, it oscillates between asserting the art market's difference from and affirming its equivalence to other markets, a tension with a long history in art history and criticism, especially in debates over art's commodification, as well as economics (cf., Beech). Apart from a Phillips day sale auction scene and in-gallery sales at End of Century during an opening event (all low-dollar and, in the latter case, identified as "collectibles" rather than artworks), the show shows only spaces of commerce – which are sites of labor – rather than commerce itself. *Gallery Girls*' real action, then, takes place not in the art market as a market for goods but rather in the art market as a market for labor, and the cast's professional quests function as a metonym for the art market as a whole.

Over the course of the show, the four interns are pitted against each other in the labor market, but the bases and outcomes of their competition differ in revealing ways. The

5 Flavorwire Staff, A Brief Survey of Gallerinas in Pop Culture, in: Flavorwire. Accessed 29 April 2021. (https://www.flavorwire.com/3053887a-brief-survey-of-gallerinas-in-pop-culture).

6 My use of "sole" here is admittedly qualified, as I'm referring to commercial, US-produced programming specifically identified and marketed as reality television. *Antiques Roadshow* premiered in 1979 in the UK (with a US version arriving in 1997), more than a decade before *Cops*, which is widely regarded as the genesis of the genre.

7 "Gallery Girls Cast & Info."

two interns working at a gallery in Soho are positioned as peers, and neither is shown to have any specific skills (e.g., advanced knowledge of Chinese culture or language) that would advantage them; yet the gallery owner's treatment of them differs radically, with one (Maggie) being assigned the most menial of tasks (e.g., counting the pebbles in an installation, replacing water in the dog bowl) while the other (Liz) sets her own agenda. The show offers many potential reasons for Liz and Maggie's differential treatment at the gallery, but the most concrete and compelling is their differing social capital, i.e., Liz's father is a renowned collector, a fact which Liz deftly deploys. At the art advisory, Amy, Liz's social peer (they hail from the same Miami stratum), is less adept at exploiting the difference in social capital, ultimately losing her internship for inappropriately asserting herself over the other intern (Kerri, from working-class Long Island). Near the show's end, Amy and Maggie (who quit her previous internship) unknowingly compete for another gallery internship, and Amy's newfound humility (her parents have decided to sell the apartment she's been living in) and entrepreneurialism win her the position. That same entrepreneurialism had been lionized over the previous two episodes, in which Amy convinces the three entrepreneurs to stage a pop-up version of their gallery-cum-boutique during Art Basel Miami Beach; the pop-up's (putative) success is pictured as owing entirely to Amy's initiative, contrasted with her counterparts' preference for pools and parties. At the show's close, Amy's combination of entrepreneurial spirit and social capital have effectively made her the winner, qualified as her success (a part-time gallery job) may be; her position is paid (unlike Liz's continuing internship) and in the art world (which Kerri, exhausted by juggling both a job and an internship, has left).

In presenting the art market through the lens of labor and, more specifically, labor in the form of internships and entrepreneurship, I want to argue, *Gallery Girls* attempts to inscribe the art market (and, by extension, art world) within the logics of neoliberalism (understood, following Brown, as a political rationality). Despite the cast's frequent references to the art world's unique differences, the show tries to elide those differences through its positing of general market equivalence, i.e., the art market is the labor market is *the* market. The disjuncture between the cast's assertions and the show's representations is hardly surprising, as such "neoliberalization of cultural texts" is very much the work of reality television.[8] The reception (negative) and fate (cancellation) of *Gallery Girls*, especially when considered alongside subsequent similar reality programming and social media developments, suggests differences between – and, perhaps optimistically – limits to the capacity of media formats to neoliberalize not just cultural texts but also social phenomena.

In approaching End Of Century about collaborating on a pop-up during Art Basel Miami Beach, Amy describes her involvement as an investment, which indexes the revisioning of labor as "human capital," theorized and popularized by Chicago School economist Gary Becker. Recasting workers in terms not of what they do (labor) but what they possess (capital) effected a profound change, in the workplace by promoting individualiza-

8 Guy Redden, Is Reality TV Neoliberal?, in *Television & New Media* 19, no. 5 (July 2018): 399–414, 410. (https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476417728377).

tion and undermining collective identity and action, and in society, by transforming the content and aims of the educational system away from civic life in favor of the economy. As bundles of capital, workers are impelled to invest in themselves so as to enhance their current market value and future employment prospects, yielding a boom in higher education demand and costs, as well as internship labor, much (if not, most) of which is unpaid – or, in the case of credit-bearing internships, paid *for* by the students themselves. Internships, along with other forms of un(der)paid labor, have been an integral part of the creative industries, partly due to their structural conditions (popular appeal that leads to relative oversupply of labor, "psychic income" that justifies lower wages, etc.), but internships have become so common that they have effectively "replaced the entry-level job."[9] Though Amy counterposes internships and entrepreneurship (asking the camera, "Why intern for free when you can create your own event?"), the two are fundamentally linked through this logic of self-investment, as well as through the entrepreneurial forms most creative work takes (e.g., freelancing). As sociologist Tomas Marttila argues, "The entrepreneur has become a 'specter' because instead of referring to a particular and distinctive social practice (founding enterprises, initiating economic innovations), it has turned into general dictum or ethos for the way in which a number of different social practices should be carried out."[10] Thus, the development and deployment of the theory of human capital has effected a profound restructuring of subjectivity:

> It is this approach to labor that allows for the radical shift in the understanding of *homo oeconomicus* from being 'a partner in exchange' to being an 'entrepreneur of himself'… Now, all that matters for questions of who one is, for the 'truth' of a subject, are the activities of that subject, the behaviors, conducts, and the accumulation of skills and qualities that allow for the self to arrive at a self-understanding of those activities as producing some benefit.[11]

Reality television has an intimate relationship with neoliberalism, especially in terms of labor and subjectivity. The first reality television shows (*COPS* and *America's Most Wanted*, both from FOX), David Grazian argues, were reactions to the 1988 Writers Guild of America strike, which drove television producers to find strategies for developing programs immune to the tactics of organized labor.[12] Using amateur (free) and mostly non-union labor and taking advantage of lower-cost sites in developing countries (*Survivor* is exemplary) aligned the production process with neoliberal economic principles.

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9 Olivia B. Waxman , How Internships Replaced the Entry-Level Job, in *Time*, July 25, 2018. (https://time.com/5342599/history-of-interns-internships/).

10 Tomas Marttila, *The Culture of Enterprise in Neoliberalism: Specters of Entrepreneurship*, Routledge Advances in Sociology 87 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 2.

11 Andrew Dilts, From 'Entrepreneur of the Self' to 'Care of the Self': Neo-Liberal Governmentality and Foucault's Ethics, in *Foucault Studies*, September 12, 2011, 130–46, 139. (https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i12.3338, 135).

12 David Grazian, Neoliberalism and the Realities of Reality Television, in *Contexts* 9, no. 2 (May 2010): 68–71, 68. (https://doi.org/10.1525/ctx.2010.9.2.)

Simultaneously, the narrative content, in the form of the gamedoc, aligned with neoliberalism's morals ("naked displays of individualism and self-interest" even in the context of "teamwork," "plac[ing] their desire to win above personal loyalties, but not their slavish (if rarely reciprocated) devotion to the boss"), explicitly articulated in contestants' failings as grounds for their dismissal from competition.[13]

Delving even more deeply into the genre, Nick Couldry argues that reality television (and the gamedoc genre specifically) translates "into ritual that enacts as 'play' an acceptable version of the values and compulsions on which that cruelty [neoliberal economic organization] depends…smuggling past us one set of terms, while apparently enacting another."[14] As such, reality television becomes a site of displaced narratives engendered by the difficult contradictions of the economic order, denied elsewhere as "natural" by that very order's "common sense." The two primary narratives that Couldry explores are the imperative to be passionate about one's employment: "Passion becomes a *necessity* in the neoliberal workplace because its work of denial erases contradictions and legitimates the extended appropriation of the worker's time" and to be authentic under conditions of constant surveillance. Couldry notes how the reality TV gamedoc template has been extended from pure "games" (e.g., *Survivor*, *Big Brother*) to various service professions (e.g., *Airport*, *Hotel*, *Driving School*) – even entrepreneurship in *The Apprentice* – and how tightly it aligns with the contemporary labor market:

> In these various ways, the "as if" of reality TV tracks with striking fidelity the dynamics of the neoliberal workplace: It is a place of compulsory self-staging, required team-work, and relation by unquestionable external authority mediated via equally unquestionable norms or "values," to which nonetheless the worker / player must submit in a "positive," even "passionate" embrace, while enduring, alone, the long-term consequences of the "game," if game it is.[15]

Gallery Girls hews closely to the performance values mapped out by Couldry; however, such close adherence to those values come at the cost of fidelity to values and structuring distinctions within the subculture represented.

The series' popular critical reception questioned the authenticity and veracity of the show's representation of the art world and the representative capacity of reality television. Comparing *Gallery Girls* to its predecessor, *Work of Art*, *The New Yorker* noted that "whatever insider glimpse was offered through the wrong peephole," as the producers "sought out a subculture, filmed an ersatz version of it, and thus reinforced (while reinventing) a cultural stereotype."[16] Other critics, too, noted how the reductive thrust

13 Grazian, 69.

14 Nick Couldry, Reality TV, or The Secret Theater of Neoliberalism, in *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 30, no. 1 (February 11, 2008): 3–13. (https://doi.org/10.1080/10714410701821255), 3.

15 Couldry, 10.

16 Emma Allen, inBad Art: Bravo's 'Gallery Girls' | The New Yorker, in *The New Yorker*, 27 August 2010. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/bad-art-bravos-gallery-girls.

of reality television obliterates subcultural nuances in an attempt at broad appeal. Thus, while the show "has failed to penetrate the New York art world… [I]t's doing a fantastic job at showcasing the lives of young women who have the ambition to make it in New York but lack the guile to ascend off-screen."[17] The reception within the art world media was far more mixed and often caustic, largely because of the reductiveness pardoned by other critics. For *Newsweek* art critic Blake Gopnik, the show completely misrepresents the art world: "I've spent years living on planet art-world, and I couldn't see any trace of it in a program that's supposed to be set there."[18] *Hyperallergic*'s Hrag Vartanian dismissed the show outright in a one-sentence review, entitled "All You Need to Know about *Gallery Girls*": "Yes, *Gallery Girls* is essentially *Mean Girls* in a gallery … but with really bad 'writing.'"[19] Other art bloggers were more excoriating, e.g., describing it as "a shame-filled experience that leaves the viewer with a fecal taste in the mouth and a deep resentment for having carved even one second of precious time from this short life to squander on such a vile and pointless fiasco."[20] *Art F City* blogger Will Brand published one of the more positive assessments of the show in *L Magazine*, calling it "excellent hate-watching" but also drawing out some of the cultural barriers confronting (and ultimately not surmounted by) the show.[21] Principally, as he notes, "the art world's cliques and caste systems are quietly self-enforced, and open conflict is an unseemly rarity," which, while acknowledged occasionally by the characters, runs counter to the dramatic imperatives of reality television. Moreover, the very publicity of the show contradicts one of the primary structuring values of the art world (and its most contentious for economists), discretion: "Surely no one who properly understood the art world would think this could be good publicity, and reality TV is no way to build your reputation for good taste."[22] Not only does the value placed on discretion contradict the "dramatic imperatives" of reality television, it also contradicts the dynamics of the contemporary (neoliberal) labor market, in which self-promotion of all forms – e.g., personal branding through social media – is an absolute imperative.

In its review, *Time* remarked on the parallels between the white-collar challenges of the show and the blue-collar challenges of another reality competition *Get To Work*: "[T]hey're up against the same dynamic as the laborers of *Get To Work*: they're trying to

17 Alice Gregory, Gallery Girls: Bravo's Latest Reality Series Attempts To Infiltrate the Manhattan Art Scene, in *Slate Magazine*, 13 August 2012. (https://slate.com/culture/2012/08/bravos-gallery-girls-reviewed.html).

18 Blake Gopnik, Gallery Girls Misrepresents New York's Art World, in *Newsweek*, 6 August 2012. (https://www.newsweek.com/gallery-girls-misrepresents-new-yorks-art-world-64469).

19 Hrag Vartanian, All You Really Need to Know About Gallery Girls, in *Hyperallergic*, 14 August 2012. (https://hyperallergic.com/55581/all-you-really-need-to-know-about-gallery-girls/).

20 Marina Galperina, Your 'Gallery Girls' Drinking Game Rules For Tonight, in *ANIMAL* (blog), 13 August 2012. (http://animalnewyork.com/2012/your-gallery-girls-drinking-game-rules-for-tonight/).

21 Will Brand, You've Got Some Excellent Hate-Watching in Store with Gallery Girls., in *The L Magazine*, 10 August 2012. (https://www.thelmagazine.com/2012/08/youve-got-some-excellent-hate-watching-in-store-with-gallery-girls/). See also Brand, Art F City at the L Magazine: Gallery Girls Is Terrible, and That's Amazing, in *Art F City*, 10 August 2012. (http://artfcity.com/2012/08/10/art-fag-city-at-the-l-magazine-gallery-girls-is-terrible-and-thats-amazing/).

22 Brand, Hate-Watching.

succeed in a market that needs them far less than they need it, and it sets its terms ruthlessly. Hours, long; labor, menial; pay, maybe never."[23] While the review acknowledges the class differences between the shows, it ultimately equates the shows as reflecting a common economic reality, one in which individuals, despite their different given positions, are thoroughly responsibilized for their success or failure in the economy. While pointing in the right direction, the review stops short of articulating the full significance of this commonality, which is the naked portrayal of neoliberal subjectivity, specifically the equivalence of "subject" with "entrepreneur." Everything the characters do is effectively directed towards appreciating their valuation by the market, whether through sales at End of Century or paid employment at a gallery or public attention at Art Basel Miami Beach.[24] Kerri's ultimate departure from the art world exemplifies the exhaustion such relentless self-appreciating produces (which Lazzarato posits as evidence of neoliberalism's crisis of subjectivity) while the competition between Maggie and Amy most explicitly dramatizes the logic of neoliberal subjectivity.[25] Portraying the tension between the economic realities of the neoliberal labor market and the behavioral expectations of the art world in *Gallery Girls* is both the show's (ideological) success and its (commercial) failure.

The show's inability to capture an audience – its average viewership was roughly half that of *Work of Art: The Next Great Artist*'s first season – and secure a second season is, I want to argue, more than a trivial commercial failure. As Skeggs and Wood argue in their incisive study of UK reality television and its audiences, "Dismissing reality television as trash television conceals rather than reveals it to be *precisely* a site where new understandings of value and ideology are coming into effect" and, as significantly, where these understandings are contested.[26] Despite the disidentification professed by art critics, the show's depiction of internship labor – dubious learning opportunities, class inequalities, gender biases – align with those reported by young women interns in the creative industries, and artistic labor is frequently invoked as a model of – even an ideal for – immaterial and entrepreneurial labor.[27] Moreover, reality television has proven exceptionally

23 James Poniewozik, Scenes from the Class Struggle in Reality Television, in *Time*, 14 August 2012. (https://entertainment.time.com/2012/08/14/scenes-from-the-class-struggle-in-reality-television/).

24 In *Gallery Girls*, the relationship between neoliberalism and subjectivity involves gender as well as labor, an analysis of which lies beyond the current scope. For more on this conjuncture, see Angela McRobbie, Notes on the Perfect: Competitive Femininity in Neoliberal Times, in *Australian Feminist Studies* 30, no. 83 (January 2, 2015), 3–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2015.1011485.; Johanna Oksala, The Neoliberal Subject of Feminism, in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 42, no. 1 (January 2011), 104–20, (https://doi.org/10.1080/00071773.2011.11006733.); Rosalind Gill, Culture and Subjectivity in Neoliberal and Postfeminist Times, in *Subjectivity* 25, no. 1 (December 2008): 432–45. (https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2008.28).

25 Maurizio Lazzarato, Immaterial Labor, in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, Vol. 7. Theory out of Bounds (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

26 Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood, *Reacting to Reality Television: Performance, Audience and Value* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 233.

27 Leslie Regan Shade and Jenna Jacobson, Hungry for the Job: Gender, Unpaid Internships, and the Creative Industries, in *The Sociological Review* 63, no. 1_suppl (May 2015): 188–205. (https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12249); Maurizio Lazzarato, Immaterial Labor, in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, Vol.

capable of successfully valorizing a wide range of lives and livelihoods, from traditional forms of labor (e.g., *The Deadliest Catch*) to marginal forms of subculture (e.g., *RuPaul's Drag Race*). Conversely, many currents in contemporary art take "reality" as their primary material and participation as an integral component. In so many ways, then, the contemporary art market seems like it *should* work for (and as) reality television, so why doesn't it? Part of the answer is structural, as the art market lacks the opportunities for brand extension that provide platforms for contestants' continued success. For participants in shows based on and in the creative industries (e.g., *American Idol* and even *RuPaul's Drag Race*), career paths are seldom independent celebrity – contrary to the promise of many shows' titles – but rather branded spin-offs and / or live events, and these brand extensions have yet to find their art market equivalents.[28]

Another, and perhaps more important, part of the answer must be cultural. Redden proposes that "reality TV provides moral orientations that facilitate buy-in for neoliberalism – in a way that is somewhat different from elite-to-elite influence or populist trickery" and argues for its performative effects: "As this material environment [of television production] is structured through neoliberal principles, it is logical that the symbolic economies of reality TV are also," and these symbolic economies construct the "reality" that viewers come to expect from the world itself.[29] The commercial success and longevity of a reality television program could thus be taken as analogous to Austen's "felicitous" performative utterances, a possibility that Couldry and Littler trenchantly explore in the context of *The Apprentice*: "By presenting the 'reality' of work and business in the form of highly structured entertainment, *The Apprentice* transforms the norms of the neoliberal workplace into taken-for-granted 'common sense'".[30] Couldry and Littler note that, despite the neoliberalism's near-global economic and political dominance, *The Apprentice* has met with uneven success, doing best in the US and UK (where working hours are highest) while being cancelled after just one season in Finland and Germany (where work cultures are, arguably, less neoliberalized). Similarly, I would suggest, *Gallery Girls*' lack of resonance and recognition with audiences reflects a misalignment of values – not just art critics' disavowals of the art world depicted but also others' expectations of art's exceptionality. Particularly, because reality television is *un*critical in its relationship to reality, it is at odds with so much contemporary art, which seeks to defamiliarize rather than naturalize current social, economic, and political conditions.[31] That disjuncture

7. Theory out of Bounds (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Jen Harvie, The 'Artrepreneur': Artists and Entrepreneurialism, in Jen Harvie, *Fair Play — Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 62–107. (https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137027290_3).

28 For its two seasons, *Work of Art: The Next Great Artist* featured a solo show at the Brooklyn Museum as part of its top prize, but the shows did not lead to significant critical acclaim or market traction.

29 Guy Redden, Is Reality TV Neoliberal?, 410–11.

30 Nick Couldry and Jo Littler, Work, Power and Performance: Analysing the 'Reality' Game of The Apprentice, in *Cultural Sociology* 5, no. 2 (July 2011), 263–79, 265. (https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975510378191).

31 As Willem Schinkel has argued, "While Clement Greenberg (1939) once commented that modern art withdrew itself from civil society and capitalism, it would appear that contemporary art seeks to reintegrate itself into society by defamiliarizing society… Instead of becoming philosophy, as Hegel envisaged, contemporary art is much more readily becoming akin to sociology." Willem Schinkel, The Autopoiesis

– and *Gallery Girls*' consequent failure – is politically significant because it represents a site where "neoliberal market ideology is implausible when presented as an explicit validation of work's social organization."[32]

That implausibility is, of course, modest and contingent, so I want to be careful not to overstate its prospect as, to borrow from David Harvey, a "space of hope."[33] The perennial failures of reality television to successfully appropriate the art world (*Work of Art: The Next Great Artist*, *Gallery Girls*, *Art Breakers*, *Street Art Throwdown*, among others) mirror the successive failures of art investment funds to financialize the art market, either not securing enough capital to launch or generating less than stellar returns.[34] Whatever resistance or, simply, alternatives these failures suggest sits in tension with social media's impact on the art market / world (and, indeed, the world at large).[35] Social media advance both financialization of the social and the generalization of neoliberal subjectivity. Arvidsson contends that "[w]ith the progressive digital remediation of social life, through the expansion of Facebook and similar platforms, the social logic of the derivative is increasingly applied to the valuation of the kinds of lived intangibles, like inter-personal trust and individual reputation, that make productive cooperation possible in complex decentralized networks," and Hearn analyzes how "outer-directed promotional selfhood, or self-branding, [has been] introduced by the reality television production and generalized across social media such as Facebook and YouTube".[36] Writing for *Observer* on the occasion of Bravo's April 2020 marathon re-screening of *Gallery Girls*, Hannah Holmes reflects somewhat nostalgically on how much the art world has changed – and likely to change even more in the wake of the global pandemic – since the show's first run, and, fittingly, she closes with the most striking difference between then and now: "There are many other 'period' signifiers that make *Gallery Girls* seem like it was beamed from another planet, but this gallery [End Of Century] in particular is perhaps the most vivid because, eight years later, young people seeking New York City notoriety don't need their own galleries to accrue relevancy: they just need Instagram."[37] Even so, reality television

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of the Artworld after the End of Art, in *Cultural Sociology* 4, no. 2 (July 2010), 267–90, 287. (https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975510368476).

32 Couldry and Littler, Work, Power and Performance, 276.

33 David Harvey, The Art of Rent: Globalisation, Monopoly and the Commodification of Culture, in *Socialist Register* 38 (2002): 93–110, 107.

34 Noah Horowitz, *The Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market* (Princeton, NJ: University of Princeton Press, 2011).

35 The argument limned here by way of conclusion is at the center of a larger, on-going project.

36 Adam Arvidsson, Facebook and Finance: On the Social Logic of the Derivative, in *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, no. 6 (November 2016), 3–23, 3. (https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276416658104); Alison Hearn, Producing 'Reality': Branded Content, Branded Selves, Precarious Futures, in Laurie Ouellette, ed., *A Companion to Reality Television* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 437–55, here 451. For more on financialization of contemporary art, see Victoria Ivanova, Contemporary Art and Financialization: Two Approaches, in *Finance and Society* 2, no. 2 (19 December 2016), 127. (https://doi.org/10.2218/finsoc.v2i2.1726).

37 Hannah Holmes, Bravo's 'Gallery Girls' Shows How Much the Art World Has Changed in 8 Years, in *Observer* (blog), April 28, 2020. (https://observer.com/2020/04/revisiting-gallery-girls-bravo-how-art-world-has-changed/).

hasn't yet given up on the art world. In 2019, NBC was reportedly casting for an "art boy" edition of its long-running series, *The Bachelor*, but neither of the bachelors featured since that announcement have come from the art world.[38] In December 2020, London Live was casting for *Next Big Thing*, in which a crowd-selected group of artists will be filmed for a month as they create a work for a virtual auction and judges' award.

Paul Melton is an Associate Professor in Art Market Studies at the SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology, New York.

38 Caroline Goldstein, Like 'The Bachelor,' But for Art Boys? NBC Is Looking to Cast Single Artists for a New Reality Show, in *Artnet News*, 22 August 2019. (https://news.artnet.com/art-world/art-boys-tv-show-casting-call-1633132); Morgan Neil, Art Boys Wanted For a Bachelor-Esque Dating Show, in *PAPER*, 26 August 2019 (https://www.papermag.com/art-boys-bachelor-nbc-2640045946.html). The "art boy" phenomenon merits its own analysis. See, for example, Rachel Dodes, From J-Law to Meryl, Stars Are (Literally) Embracing the Art Boy, in *Vanity Fair*, May 2019. (https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2019/04/celebrities-who-date-the-art-boys); Tim Schneider, The Gray Market: Why Hollywood's Love Affair With 'Art Boys' Reveals Something Bigger About the Art Market (and Other Insights), in *Artnet News*, 29 April 2019. (https://news.artnet.com/opinion/art-boy-art-market-1529074).