

ART AND MONEY AT THE CURATED_BY VIENNA 4. 10. 2015

ART AND MONEY AT THE
CURATED_BY VIENNA
by Max Henry

by Max Henry



This years "curated_by vienna" addresses artist's new strategies for a post capitalist era of perpetual crisis. From Bitcoin, to backroom selling, our writer explores what "Tomorrow is now" has to offer.

Kerstin Brätsch and Debo Eilers, KAYA V, curated by N.O Madski, Vienna 2015
Courtesy Galerie Meyer Kainer
Photo: Ulf Holz

Art and money; art about money, and the mercurial socio-economic conditions of globalization underscores the 7th iteration of curated_by_vienna. The hefty annual investment in culture by the Vienna Business Agency seems to be paying off. It's become

an institution unto itself. And, like New York's Whitney Biennial it's often a critically charged love/hate affair that frequently flops yet cannot be ignored. Each year a chosen curator, philosopher, historian, or theorist conceptualizes an overarching thematic structure. Individual curators then interpret this theme within one of a selected number of Viennese galleries. Last year's provocatively titled "The Century of the Bed" was a seductive idea laid to waste by so-so curating and the uneven projects realized. The 2015 edition sings a different tune; content wise it's the most consistent one yet. Ironically, it took a king's ransom to make an exhibition series on and about capital in the era of perpetual crisis.

A dichotomy of sorts, "Tomorrow Today" is framed around philosopher Armen Avanessian's eponymous essay, which discusses where early 21st century capitalism might go from here onwards. In turn the topic moves towards the art market and the flipper mentality of art investment as a thoroughly exploitable hard asset. Accordingly financial speculations have left us "bereft of a future and present" due to an "anti-nostalgic accelerationist (sic) perspective."



Tom Molloy, Swarm, 2006,
Mario Mauroner Contemporary Art, Vienna 2015
Courtesy Rubicon Gallery

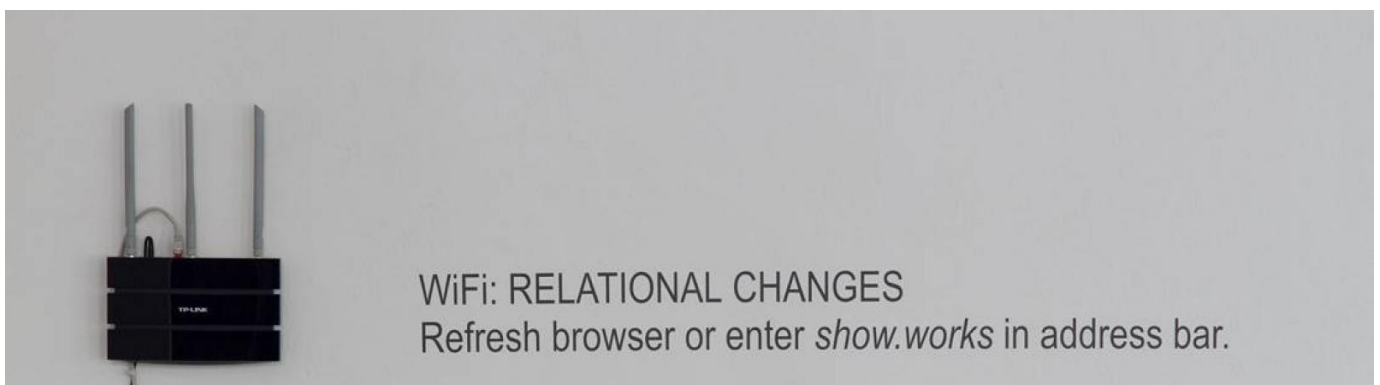
Gold is the iconic image in "It's Money Jim, but not as we know it," organized by Katerina Gregos at Mario Mauroner Contemporary Art. The large-scale photographs by Cristina Lucas get directly to the point, documenting gold bars in a storage vault in Spain's central bank. Stacked in place like rows of gleaming minimalist objects, *The Treasure Vault*, *Representing Land II* (both 2014) are contrasted by an installation of 2000 blue U.S. dollar

Perspective I and II (both 2014) are contrasted by an installation of 3000 plus U.S. dollar bills pinned to the wall folded origami style to form a decorative camouflage pattern (*Swarm*, 2006 by Tom Molloy). Federico Martinez Montoya's 2013 single channel video *Forge Money (1 US Dollar)* was in effect also a sound piece showing the repetitious act of a hammer pulverizing a metal coin into a useless lumpen mass. Additionally framed works by Danilo Correale, *untitled* (2011), were made from the recycled pulp of losing lottery tickets.

From the get-go an overt antipathy towards capitalism was palpably felt here and in other exhibitions in the series. Capitalism is what keeps the galleries and museums open and I've yet to see anyone come up with a better alternative other than plain barter. So what could break the back of such a fiduciary juggernaut? Bitcoin, that dubious boogeyman "money," has found its way into the milieu of contemporary art as a new cultural signifier.



Relational Changes, curated by_ Cointemporary, Vienna 2015
Courtesy Christine König Galerie





Relational Changes, curated by_ Cointemporary, Vienna 2015
Courtesy Christine König Galerie

The artist-run platform Cointemporary is the brainchild of the impressive Andy Boot and Valentin Ruhry who use it to sell art on their URL. The artists smoothly coalesced a facet of their long-term, mostly web-based project, for Christine König gallery. The exhibition "Relational Changes" updates 90's relational aesthetics where the event/interaction takes precedence over an actual installed gallery exhibition of saleable objects. In this version art works are viewed online with the added caveat that collectors can only purchase works using the crypto currency.



Relational Changes. curated by Cointemporary. Vienna 2015

In the confines of the brick and mortar gallery the dynamic duo have installed a café/bar with weekly programming. Discussions cover all of the hot button issues of the new era: copyright (Richard Prince are you listening?), big data, Bitcoin, the Internet of things, et al. The presentation is a smart example of a distinct Viennese interdisciplinary practice that is among the most cutting-edge of "curated_by." Ruhry designed the pristine room environment with handsome chairs, round tables, and long wood benches with elegant beveled concrete inserts. Refreshments were doled out at "The Router Bar," designed in collaboration with artist Kay Walkowiak. The only art exhibited was by artist Meuser – his wall mounted iron sculpture *Flusskrebs* (1990) looked like a deconstructed Mark Di Suvero. Until purchased and delivered all other interaction with the rest of the art objects are solely on the web. Every Tuesday the café Schachklub invites the public to play chess after introductory comments by prominent chess players and artists. Here the project elliptically rounds out the historical avant-garde thread of the chess game, from Marcel Duchamp to Maurizio Cattelan.

Across the board most of the exhibitions had convincing and often subtle content that jibed with the overarching theme put into effect. The most theatrically bombastic however, was to be found at Meyer Kainer. The gallery invited Hamburg based artist N.O.Madski to organize a collaboration between artist Kerstin Brätsch and Debo Eilers (KAYA). Brätsch's star has been on the rise since her inclusion in the critically panned MoMA exhibition, "The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World." In addition to his own weirdo practice the ambiguously named Debo Eilers (aka Jeremy) has a history of collusion with Brätsch also extending to N.O.Madski's fluid graffiti tags included in the exhibition.





Installation view
Kerstin Brätsch and Debo Eilers, KAYA V, curated_by N.O.Madski, Vienna 2015
Courtesy Galerie Meyer Kainer
Photo: Uli Holz

The exhibition packed a wallop in a physical, industrially tough and decisive way. Comprised of massive painting/sculpture hybrids they made for proxy bodies, which were heavy on leather, aluminum tubing, weighty iron gear wheel discs, Plexiglas, and vinyl. Overt references to Mapplethorpe leather boys, Ugo Rondinone or Ricardo Brey masks, Monica Bonvicini swing contraptions, and B-horror movies props made for a compelling corporeal experience. All of this was stylistically tied together by the signature colour/material clashes Brätsch is known for. The “paintings” bear resemblance to body bags placed on insane asylum hospital beds with the straps used to hold down hysterical patients. Such monstrosities are born from the womb of dark subcultural gutters coopted and monetized by commercial peddlers of Goth horror. A nod to the financial/art market was to be found in the weighty hanging gear wheels turned into giant sized coinage. They’re outsized facsimile embellishments of the unique euro coin Brätsch had been commissioned to produce by the French mint.



Krinzinger Projekte, "Verkauf in Nebenräumen (Sales in the Side Rooms)" curated_by Harald Falckenber, Vienna 2015
Courtesy Galerie Krinzinger
Photo: Jasha Greenberg



Krinzinger Projekte, "Verkauf in Nebenräumen (Sales in the Side Rooms)" curated_by Harald Falckenber, Vienna 2015
Courtesy Galerie Krinzinger
Photo: Jasha Greenberg

From the durable goods of the art object hard asset, to suspect virtual “coin of the virtual realm,” there were so many intangibles at play throughout “curated_by.” Patronage of art goes a long way back, and there are more Medici’s than ever building private museums. Well-known Hamburg collector Harald Falckenberg was invited by Galerie Krinzinger to organize *Sales in the Sideroom*, a “concept” exhibition that in the gallery spaces consisted of showing nothing more than wall labels. Each label was placed just so, as if next to the actual work, and detailed the standard information such as the artist’s name, title, year, media and size. Most of the works actually came from the sizable private collection of Dr. Krinzinger herself. To view the works with the intent to purchase one had to enter a hidden wall “back room” with the knowledgeable gallery docent.

**HERE
SURREPTITIOUS**

**COMMERCE
WAS
POSSIBLE
WITHOUT THE
PRYING EYES
OF THE
PUBLIC,
UNLIKE THE
OSTENTATIOUS
SPENDING
DONE AT ART
FAIRS.**

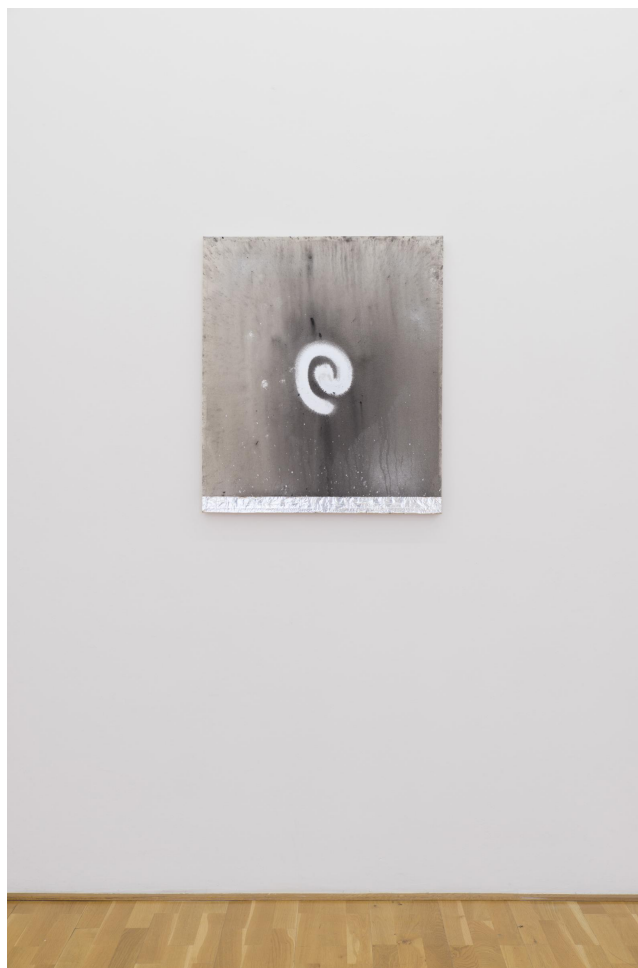


Dexter Sinister, At 1.1 Scale, 2015
Installation view "The * of love," Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna 2015

Courtesy Galerie Martin Janda
Photo: Markus Tretter

For the entire series of shows, capitalism sure took a pounding in antagonistic and often deceptive ways. There was a creepy algorithmic automation in Dexter Sinister's Asterisk, at Martin Janda. Intriguing denuded Goth metal symbol paintings by Charlie Woolley at Andreas Huber and global art as fictitious commercial global index in the matrix itself at Georg Kargl. Ironically, the network was represented pre-Internet, in a vintage Heimo Zobernig video shot from the window of the sexy editorial offices of *Texte zur Kunst*. Shown at Emanuel Layr, the dense and strategic curating (by Catherine Chevalier and Benjamin Hirte) was in analog form a mapped out hyperlink in its erudite collection of videos, books, and printed ephemera.

As 2016 approaches art is currency in this fossilized system of winner take all. It's the bulwark against slick pitchman selling snake oil to the huddled masses, the planned obsolescence of products made in China, and the savage excess of the one percent, who admittedly help along the trickle down economics of the mid-range to the emerging sector of the art biz.



Charlie Woolley, X, (4), 2015
Courtesy Galerie Andreas Huber
Photo: Stefan Lux





Still from Heimo Zobernig, Videoedition für Texte zur Kunst, 1991, Video
Part of Annexes: books, editions & vitrines and a new presentation of "Berlin Local", curated_by
Catherine Chevalier and Benjamin Hirte. Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna 2015



Installation view, Annexes: books, editions & vitrines and a new presentation of "Berlin Local",
curated_by Catherine Chevalier and Benjamin Hirte. Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna 2015
Courtesy of Galerie Emanuel Layr
Photo: Georg Petermichl

The new age of 21st century materialism is paradoxically about immaterial virtual facets surreptitiously attempting to extend its creepy obsidian mirror into ones personal space. Change is in the air, no doubt we're hurtling into new terrain that demands new ways of thinking with outside the box cultural signifiers. Intelligent commentary has long been made between art and the market, just remember 80's commodity art and its self-reflexive content. The deep resentment and disgust of the flippers quick rate of turnover is commensurate with social media interactions spurring pump and dump FOMO collecting.

In "Tomorrow Today" many aspects of Avanesian's guideposts were seriously extrapolated, you felt an urgency to assess capitalism without ethics, and visually articulate the complicated intangibles of "art and finance capital." Everyone knows that the emperor isn't wearing any clothes wherefore contemporary practice delves into the collective primal scream. Mainstream behavioral modification may have sullied the good name of art yet it can never be totally bastardized.

curated by_vienna is on view until 17 Oct 2015.

Max Henry is a poète maudit and mercenary curator.

CURATED_BY VIENNA	MAX HENRY	ARMEN AVANESSIAN	VIENNA
KERSTIN BRÄTSCH	RELATIONAL AESTHETICS	BITCOIN	CAPITALISM
ANDY BOOT	VALENTIN RUHRY	GALERIE MEYER KAINER	