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# INSTITUTE FOR NEW ARTISTIC THINKING

## Beiträge

# WHAT IS AUTONOMOUS ART? WHAT IS KUNSTFREIHEIT / ARTISTIC FREEDOM?

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An attempt to bring clarity into a muddled debate.

Over the last few decades the contemporary Culture Industry has cemented a small number of readymade definitions of art into the public consciousness -by now accepted as absolute standards which shape and control the production and reception of art to a near-total degree- and has in this process -tacitly- not only confused but redefined the idea and definition of what it means for an artist and art to be autonomous and free. The media in the UK have embraced the Culture Industry's definitions and standards with particular enthusiasm and thus predominantly focus on -and promote- works, which are politically,

correct, provide spectacle and shallow entertainment or define art as a currency. Whereas in Germany the increasing absence of autonomous art from the contemporary art world is at least occasionally taken note, the debate in the UK seems completely disinterested in or oblivious to this fact. However, even when the question of Kunstfreiheit/the freedom of art and the absence of autonomous art is the focus of the public debate in Germany, this situation is very much assessed and judged using the Culture Industry's own logic, vocabulary and pre-defined standards. Thus a critical distance is not only diminished but has become close to impossible.

The following is an attempt to clarify and define what substantiates freedom and autonomy in art and to highlight the vacuum that is produced by the absence of autonomous art from the public realm.

### **AUTONOMOUS ART = ,WORKS OF ART WHICH ARE NOT ART'**

1. Autonomous art is art, which has, and seeks to solve, an art-intrinsic ,problem'.
2. The ,problem' is not an art-external problem.
3. The ,problem' is unique to the individual.
4. It is not shared, or shareable, or collective.
5. It is not a common property or idea.
6. The ,problem' cannot be chosen at will.
7. The ,problem' is self-emerging/not constructed.
8. It has its own ,inner logic', which the artist tries to unfold, reveal and understand.
9. The ,problem' protects the work from manipulation by external forces.
10. Pre-defined standards, by the nature of the self-emerging work, cannot come into play in the radical pursuit of a ,problem'.
11. The ,problem' itself is radical and uncompromising.
12. The art intrinsic ,problem', discovered by an individual -through the work itself- creates difference.
13. The exploration of a ,problem' is a quest for ,difference' and ,the new' which are essential features specific to Western art.
14. The new' and ,difference' emerge within the context of the history of art.
15. The ,problem' presents an ultimate challenge and difficulty.
16. It is never easy.
17. The ,problem' is unsolvable.

18. The artist attempts to 'solve' and explore the problem with each of his/her works.
19. Each work is necessarily only ever an approximation to an ideal which only the artist can sense.
20. The notion of failure plays an essential role in the artistic enquiry into the nature of the ,problem'.
21. The work itself is a constant re-construction of and attempt to define the ,problem'.
22. The 'success' and relevance of the artwork is measured against this problem itself.
23. The ,problem' contains, or is, its own authority and critical judgment.
24. The work necessarily and unavoidably leads to humility. (In contrast, the contemporary Culture Industry promotes pride and ego.)
25. Without being guided by a ,problem', the artist's choices are necessarily arbitrary.
26. The ,problem' leads to necessary decisions – the antithesis to arbitrary choices made according to a limitless ,anything goes'.
27. Without an art intrinsic ,problem' there is no freedom and no potential for real discovery.
28. **The ,problem' is the root, cause and foundation of the potential, autonomy and freedom of artist and art.**
29. The ,problem' is equivalent to a boundary/the discovery of a new limit in art which the work itself seeks to define.
30. **Whereas the question „Can one make works of art which are not art?“ has been answered by the Culture Industry once and for all with an affirmative and emphatic ,No', the work of the autonomous artist seeks to answer this question with a radical ,Yes'.**
31. The nature of the ,problem' is paradox: at the moment of its emergence and manifestation it is not art, and only if it is not art it may be(come) art.
32. Autonomous art is essentially defined by that which it does not do.
33. The autonomous artist is concerned with making works of art which are not art. ,New' means 'not art'.
34. (In contrast, the artist in the Culture Industry is exclusively focussed on ,making art'. Works are art by default.)
35. This can only be achieved within the realm of art (the problem is art-intrinsic). It is not achieved by leaving the realm of art behind.

36. **What is new does not simply replace or leave a previous notion of art behind but instead IS the manifestation of this abandonment itself.**
37. The freedom and potential of the autonomous artist are rooted in the very discovery of this hitherto unknown boundary and ,problem‘.
38. The manifestation of a new ,boundary‘ is an expression of the freedom of the artist from pre-conceived ideas and standards.
39. The self-emerging logic of the ,problem‘ is a highest form of self-restraint which safeguards against arbitrariness and empowers and directs the quest.
40. Art can only produce, address and seek to solve problems defined in and through art itself.
41. A common misconception is, therefore, to regard autonomous art or the ,art-intrinsic problem‘ as a pursuit of merely aesthetic and formal notions, focussed on the exploration of materials and visual perception. Autonomous art therefore is associated with media that are considered to be ‘traditional’ (such as painting).
42. We reject this as false.
43. Autonomous art, whilst concerned with a notion of reality that is distinctly separate from the everyday reality, does however not exist in some sort of esoteric and merely formal ,otherworld‘.
44. On the contrary, the art intrinsic ,problem‘ is deeply embedded within the context of its time.
45. The utilitarian concept and demand for ,relevance‘ is promoted by the Culture Industry. Works expressing views regarding political, social or gender issues, for example, whilst framed within the industry as ,relevant‘, are however merely a superficial commentary. On close examination it is clear that these works‘ are impotent; they have neither any efficacy as art nor as tools for social change.
46. In contrast, the pursuit of an art-intrinsic
47. ,problem‘ can lead to works which provide a quality that is non-utilitarian, incommensurable, meaningful.
48. **The question „What is art?“ in everchanging circumstances is at the core of the autonomous work.**
49. Our understanding of the nature of reality has dramatically changed over the last 150 years. Fundamental paradigm shifts in the realm of science, philosophy (and art up to the 1960s) have revolutionized our understanding of the nature of ,reality‘. The autonomous artist seeks to answer the question

„What is art/what can art be in the context of these fundamental paradigm shifts?“ through his/her work.

50. The autonomous work, whilst taking into account these fundamental paradigm shifts, at the same time seeks to define its place within the history of art.
51. The latter can be a largely subconscious process/an a priori knowing/‘a given’.)
52. **It is within these two -the context of our time and the context of art history- that the autonomous work (driven by the art intrinsic ,problem) seeks to manifest.**
53. This defines the scope of the task, the extraordinary challenge and the nature of the ambition required to even begin to attempt to make art in the 21st century.
54. In contrast, the contemporary Culture Industry is single-mindedly focussed on distracting from the sheer scale of the task and seeks to make it as easy as possible for as many people as possible to engage.
55. The promotion of the lowering of standards to the most base and infantile level ever in the history of art hides and suppresses the fact that it has perhaps never before been this difficult to make art.
56. This is not to say that it has ever been easy. Yet the complexity of our time and of our history is unprecedented and poses unprecedented challenges.
57. If the unprecedented scale and scope of the task is not fully understood by the artist then his/her work will from the outset only aim for – and therefore only achieve- a minor purpose or goal.
58. A truly extra-ordinary vision, ambition and ability are needed to meet this challenge.
59. („With an apple I will astonish Paris.“)
60. („I owe you the truth and I will show it to you.“)
61. The autonomous artist meets this challenge by engaging on a deep and fundamental level.
62. Making art in the 21st century is equivalent to attempting to climb a vertical rock face.
63. The contemporary Culture Industry, however, has installed convenient ladders and has democratically lowered the summit in order to bring it within easy reach for everyone.
64. The contemporary Culture Industry is selfdeceit on an industrial scale.

65. The autonomous artist free-climbs alone and the highest achievements in art of the past provide the oxygen.
66. There is no heroism – in the studio, all there is is hard work.
67. This situation in art is directly reflected in a literal/non-metaphorical way by the developments on Mount Everest. Money and ladders enable totally unfit, incapable, and illequipped people to scale the highest mountain on earth. Their ‚achievement‘ is as hollow and undignified -and ultimately damaging- as is the fame of the contemporary artist who can achieve superstardom and obscene levels of wealth for having achieved nothing much at all.
68. The person scaling Mount Everest by ladder literally and voluntarily buys into this industrialized self-deception. The selfie on the summit crowns the self-degrading lie.
69. Contemporary artists and audience pay with their dignity, freedom and autonomy.
70. The ‚problem‘ is the work-intrinsic strategy to create ‚ground‘. This is how the mountain is scaled.
71. Works which entertain, illustrate simple little ideas or claim to ‚raise awareness‘ about social issues etc. are dead clutter. They numb political autonomy and power and suffocate the sphere of art and culture ( in which - actually- a truly extra-ordinary and ambitious artistic and intellectual quest should take place.
72. **The essential pressing questions of our time are not being asked and discussed.**
73. Autonomous artists working along those questions struggle to find their contemporaries and cannot find a discourse that meets the requirements of their own work.
74. The intrinsic connection to art history is essential to the autonomy of art. The suppression in the contemporary art world of (the relevance of) art history contributes to the impotence of the works made according to the Culture Industry’s standards.
75. Freedom in art and freedom of speech are of a fundamentally different nature/they are incompatible. (The contemporary culture industry confuses and equates the two.)
76. **The autonomous free artist is not concerned with the freedom of speech.**
77. Freedom and autonomy in art are not granted by or dependent on external agents or forces but are manifested and come from within – through the work itself and through the individual.

78. **Autonomy is absolute self-determination. It is expressed in the work's/ the ,problem's' intrinsic and self-emerging logic as that which is 'new'.**
79. Autonomous art manifests KUNSTFREIHEIT.
80. Autonomy is the antinomy to mindless repetition.
81. The challenge for a young artist is to find his/her ,problem'.
82. Only a self-determined, autonomous and unmanipulated individual can discover a ,problem'.
83. A student encouraged and manipulated from an early age to believe in and adhere to the Culture Industry's standards will be less likely to be able to find his/her ,problem'- and is thus ,disabled' from the outset.
84. „Every advance in culture is, psychologically, an extension of consciousness, a coming to consciousness that can take place only through discrimination. Therefore, an advance always begins with individuation, that is to say with the individual, conscious of his isolation, cutting a new path through hitherto untrodden territory. To do this he must first return to the fundamental facts of his own being, irrespective of all authority and tradition, and allow himself to become conscious of his distinctiveness. If he succeeds in giving collective validity to his widened consciousness, he creates a tension of opposites that provides the stimulation which culture needs for its further progress.“ – C.G. Jung, „On Psychic Energy“ (1928). The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche. P. 111
85. Seclusion and withdrawal from ,the world' are essential for any serious artistic quest – for the discovery and the solution to an original ,problem'.
86. Retreat, separation and quiet introspection are critical in affording the highest degree of concentration that art/'the problem' requires but are increasingly hard to find and establish.
87. Only the highest degree of concentration produces ,problems' that lead to works of the highest standard – which will evoke the same/ demand the same from its audience.
88. The autonomous work -its simplicity- is always complex.
89. It is never simple.
90. It cannot be summed up in a few words or grasped at a glance.
91. It holds inexhaustible potential for exploration – for artist and audience alike.
92. ...
93. ...

## ART IN THE CULTURE INDUSTRY = WORKS WHICH ARE ART BY DEFAULT

1. Contemporary art in the public domain is dominated by works which illustrate one extremely simple idea.
2. Literally anyone can have such an idea and anyone can comprehend a work which illustrates such an idea.
3. This simple idea can refer to a) anything/any everyday object or activity  
b) political/social/gender issues or headlines which dominate the global news  
or c) an artwork made in the past.
4. Alternatively, the artwork can simply be a) a supersized reproduction of any random object, or b) a large number of identical objects neatly arranged in the gallery space, or c) an object made with obscenely expensive materials.
5. 3 and 4 describe the majority of artworks in the contemporary art world.
6. (Artistunderground categorically rejects any art work made according to these standards.)
7. The art-intrinsic problem, and with it the element of invention, development and innovation, is absent in 3 and 4.
8. The above has been made possible by a call for a ‚democratisation of art‘, introduced in the late 1950s, which has paved the way for the obliteration of any difference between art and everyday life, agents and objects.
9. Literally anyone can be an artist and anything can be art, and consequently anyone can judge art.
10. As ‚democratisation‘ (which was over time amended by the call for political correctness) is now cemented as an absolute standard for the production, education and reception of art into the public consciousness, art has consequently come to a standstill.
11. Art-external concerns and strategies replace the active art-intrinsic quest.
12. Art-external concerns are employed to distract from the vacuity of the work as art and lend the vacuous work an air of gravitas.
13. The contemporary artwork does not have/ does not seek to solve a problem, neither of an art-intrinsic nor of an art-external nature.
14. ‚Freedom‘ in contemporary art is reduced to a choice from/compliance with the small number of pre-defined standards (see 3 and 4) which are the Culture Industry’s readymade definition and final answer to the question „What is art?“.



15. The contemporary artwork is devoid of any question.
16. Being an artist and participating in the ‚art world‘ has thus become excessively easy.
17. The (pseudo-)democratisation of art, requiring the excessive lowering of standards and oversimplification of art production and art reception, has helped to establish the infantilisation of artist, art and audience as a new ideal (see also ‚The Democratisation of Art – A Curse in Disguise‘) and thus enabled the global art industry.
18. As artists and critics have deeply imbibed these standards/readymade definitions, criticism is largely eradicated. Freed from any resistance, this industry can thus function smoothly and mushroom globally.
19. The question „What is art?“, implying the notion of a boundary in art, is replaced with random choice and an arbitrary/limitless ‚anything goes‘ which prevents any possibility for development.
20. The artist in the Culture Industry is exclusively focussed on making art.
21. Failure is absent from contemporary art.
22. Career ambition replaces the work and the ‚problem-intrinsic‘ ambition.
23. ‚Research‘ replaces work.
24. ‚Collaboration‘ and ‚interdisciplinarity‘ replace the individual quest.
25. The public role and character of a work replace the intrinsically private character of the autonomous work.
26. The opinion of the public/the layperson replaces the knowledge-based review by other artists or critics.
27. Context replaces the content of the artintrinsic quest.
28. Consensus replaces diverging artistic positions.
29. Pride, ego and celebrity cult replace humility.
30. The role of the ‚culture critic‘, focussed on the study of everyday life and objects (which first emerged in the 1960s when, coincidentally, the difference between art and everyday life was abolished) has today replaced the art critic.
31. The absence of the art critic/the absence of actual criticism of art is no longer taken note of.
32. The fact that art itself, and consequently the public debate about art, are now exclusively restricted to art external issues has become normalised.
33. Thus a prominent culture critic such as Wolfgang Iltis, who essentially directs the public debate about contemporary art and artistic freedom in Germany, can even admit publicly to his preoccupation with artexternal

topics and to art itself being of minor interest – without this fact itself attracting any critical attention.

34. („I admit that I spend more time on trying to understand record sums paid on the art market than on thinking about criteria for good art.“(1) „Besides it is part of my selfunderstanding to not only write about art which I find interesting and important. Especially that which [those works which] I find boring or even unsuccessful excite me as an observer and theorist. However- and in this respect you are right- I do often write less about art than about its circumstances and contexts. The boom in art-sociologicalwriting over the last few years is thus perhaps a consequence of the very vacuum which I diagnose in my schism-text.“ (the email exchange with Wolfgang Ullrich and more thoughts on the schism creating a dangerous vacuum in contemporary art can be accessed here. )
35. The idea that the contemporary discourse about art could be different from the kind of analysis the culture critic pursues is from the outset -along with the alleged obsolescence of autonomous art- declared obsolete.
36. As the vacuum in contemporary art is largely ignored by artists, critics and journalists alike, the essential retrospective analysis which this development and its destructive, if not dangerous consequences would urgently require, is simply not taking place.
37. As the culture critic has replaced the art critic, the contemporary discourse is filled with an analysis and description of the Culture Industry's mechanisms – without anybody questioning and examining its validity in the first place.
38. The culture critic's -however accurateanalysis takes place within the logic of the Culture Industry and is thus incapable of seeing and calling out the catastrophic failings of the system. Instead it affirms and perpetuates the narrative of the obsolescence autonomous art. „(3)
39. The culture critic is not concerned with the examination of art itself but is instead focussed on context, circumstances and how the contemporary work functions within the art world.
40. The absence of actual art criticism/art critics is normalised.
41. As artist and audience have surrendered their own autonomous and knowledgebased critical judgement, the near-total critical silence and vacuum in contemporary art remain unaddressed and thus hidden in plain sight.
42. Those who dominate the public discourse have free rein and are not questioned or held to account.

43. In contrast to the autonomous artist's intrinsic ambition, the contemporary Culture Industry is single-mindedly focussed on distracting from the unprecedented scale and scope of the task of making art in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and seeks to make it as easy as possible for as many people as possible to engage.
44. Catastrophically shallow art journalism is equally accepted as normal.
45. The Guardian in the UK deserves special mention in this context. Despite providing excellent in-depth analysis and critical journalism in other realms such as climate change and politics, The Guardian completely fails to uphold a critical and knowledgebased debate about art and culture. Instead, it is not only fully compliant with the Culture Industry's lowest standards but enthusiastically promotes art focussed on spectacle, shallow entertainment or politically correct content.
46. Jonathan Jones here deserves special mention for his outstanding art reviews and recommendations the shallowness, laziness and confusion of which is hard to surpass.
47. The Art- and Culture Industry has by now fully merged with the entertainment-, tourism- and fashion industries.
48. The merging of industries is misinterpreted and sold to the public as an extension of the boundary of art.
49. Thought and quality defined by the autonomous work are replaced by the utilitarian concept of 'relevance' (a pseudosocial purpose or function of a work).
50. This 'relevance' is part and parcel of the Culture Industry's established belief system that is upheld by the industry at any cost.
51. A simple idea, repeated over and over again -devoid of a 'problem' which would drive a work's development, becomes the artist's 'brand'.
52. The contemporary artwork's intent, meaning and scope can be summed up in one sentence and is fully communicable in one (Instagram) photo.
53. The study, as well as the knowledge of and an interest in art, is not only not required but is, in fact, a hindrance to participation in the contemporary art world.
54. The suppression of knowledge and of an intellectual pursuit of and interest in art is portrayed as 'democratic'.
55. In the realm of art (and politics), the narrative of an elite that – apparently disregards ordinary people has been successfully fabricated.

56. ‚Elite‘ in art is seen as synonymous with the knowledge-based and professional pursuit which therefore must be eradicated.
57. This logic by now infiltrates school curricula, job descriptions for art teachers at art colleges and universities and government policy-making defining the field of the ‚creative industries‘.
58. This narrative purports that by abolishing this ‚elite‘/the intellectual, art professional approach, society will become more democratic.
59. Close examination shows that the alleged democratisation of art does not lead to an increased democratisation of society and increased individual freedom but instead enables an unprecedented standardisation and homogenisation of art, individuals and society.
60. The alleged democratisation of art is, in fact, pseudo-democratisation. The promised freedom is pseudo-freedom. („The Democratisation of Art – a Curse in Disguise“)
61. In truth, contemporary art and culture show the deepest contempt for the audience/the so-called ‚ordinary people‘ who are regarded as incapable of grasping works of complexity and intellect.
62. The most infantile and outright stupid works are seen to meet this public’s cultural needs and level of intelligence.
63. This lie of a supposedly arrogant art elite, implied in the narrative of the so-called democratisation of art, hides the contempt that the Culture Industry expresses for the audience.
64. The contemporary Art- and Culture Industry has a fundamental disinterest in art and in the individual at its heart.
65. The Culture Industry is exclusively focused on addressing ‚the masses‘ and treats the audience as such.
66. The contemporary Culture Industry promotes the notion that the apparently arrogant elite is synonymous with autonomous art and the art-professional, knowledge-based and intellectual approach – which therefore must, logically, be abolished.
67. The contempt for this apparent art elite, i.e. autonomous art, is by now institutionalised, promoted and deeply imbibed by the very institutions -art schools and universities responsible for the provision of high-quality art education.
68. By imbibing the Culture Industry’s call for a ‚democratisation‘ of art, high-quality art education abolishes itself.

69. The suppression/obliteration of autonomous art is a substantial impoverishment of society.
70. The language of populism has infiltrated the realm of art and politics simultaneously.
71. The Culture Industry is a major driver of this negative development.
72. In both realms, provocation and outrageousness have become some of the most potent strategies.
73. Emotional provocation is achieved by either referring to the climate- or refugee crisis, torture, injustice, suppression, sexism or to rightwing/fascist content etc.
74. Both, 'politically correct' left-wing and 'politically incorrect' right-wing themes in contemporary art can be employed to achieve the same effect – provoking strong reactions which thus distract from the actual vacuity of the work.
75. Provocation and outrageousness, in art and in politics, are equated with freedom and authority/autonomy.
76. Spectacle and provocation essentially facilitate pseudo-democratisation.
77. The only purpose of the pseudodemocratisation of art is the Culture Industry's own rampant global growth.
78. Oblivion of art history is desired as only in complete ignorance of what has been done before can the perpetual repetition of similar or the same recipes and provocations produce the desired reaction – and no criticism. For more on how the culture industry has redefined our relationship to art and culture of the past and the urgent need to protect our cultural heritage go here.
79. It is sufficient for an artist to only verbally refer to right-wing/fascist ideas, or make sexist comments. Even when it is clear that this artist does not really believe in such views and does not express them in his/her work, this verbal provocation is still sufficient to guarantee vast amounts of media attention – which then dominate the public debate.(2)
80. The public debate in the media is 'glued' to these provocations in a moral pseudodilemma.
81. Similarly, the all-time favourite -reference to human excrement-combining outrageousness with a reference to art history- proves to be an enduringly successful strategy: any form of bodily secretion and any toilets, pissoirs, fountains – canned, bottled, cast in gold or photographed (even just showing the artist spitting water) all guarantee inclusion not only in the public debate

but, more worryingly, also in art history books and the intellectual art discourse.

82. Critics, journalists and audience alike are attracted to these themes, provocations and repetitions like flies.
83. The more often a theme is regurgitated and repeated, the more ‚relevance‘ it is deemed to have.
84. Relevance is measured in the degree of the persistent repetition of a theme and the shock value of the emotive provocation.
85. (Pseudo)-‚relevance‘ replaces ‚meaning‘.
86. Feuilletons and art magazines across the world are filled with this vacuity – the absence of the autonomous art work which can now only exist in the private realm.
87. Contemporary art history is nothing but a record of the empty spectacle played out in the media.
88. The media (co-)produce spectacle and entertainment.
89. The spectacle distracts from the actual vacuity of the works as art and the total absence of art-intrinsic ‚problems‘ and achievements.
90. A ship, exhibited at great cost at a biennale in which up to a thousand refugees died, is impotent as art and impotent as an agent for social change – yet it propels the artist to international stardom.
91. (It has to be stressed how extremely easy it is to come up with an idea for this type of ‚work‘. Off the top of one’s head, anyone can conjure up countless such ideas within minutes. The financial investment, however, to realise such an act, is only accessible to the super-rich or those sponsored by the super-rich.
92. The Culture Industry’s readymade standards act as the belief system on which the logic, reasoning and confidence of the investors is founded. These standards, therefore, must be maintained at any cost.
93. The answer to the question „What is art?“ must therefore be certain – i.e. readymade and final.
94. It is sufficient in the contemporary culture industry for a work to simply ‚raise awareness‘ (as if there was a need to do so when 24-hour news provide constant updates). This kind of ‚work‘ does not reach a new understanding and formulation of art.
95. The act of showing this ship in Venice is equivalent to people slowing down on motorways to photograph horrific accidents, except that same act in art furthers the artist’s international career.

96. The spectacle turns suffering into obscene entertainment.
97. The more horrible the tragedy referred to, the higher the rate of re-circulation in the media, the higher the artist's international acclaim.
98. The artist in the Contemporary Culture industry neither invents, transforms, reveals or develops anything.
99. To treat an object such as a ship in which refugees died as art merely repeats the act and notion of 'readymades' – which, as it happens, is over a century old. However, the contemporary artist does so without asking the crucial question: „Is it art?“ or „How does it become art?“ or „Maybe it doesn't/isn't?“.
00. The mindless and empty act of shoving objects from the everyday- into the art world context is today accepted as an a priori readymade definition of art.
01. Whereas Duchamp's readymades, to this day, infinitely oscillate around unanswerable questions such as 'Is a/the pissoir art?', the contemporary readymade is intellectual and artistic dead matter and waste.
02. Duchamp's question „Can one make works of art which are not art?“, which he grappled with as early as 1913, in today's Culture Industry has been answered once and for all with a self-affirming and resounding 'No'.
03. Whereas Duchamp pursued this 'art-intrinsic' problem in a most potent form, a gesture such as showing the ship, devoid of an artintrinsic problem and question, distracts from the resulting vacuity by drawing on the spectacle of human suffering, thus desperately lending the vacuous work an air of (pseudo)-gravitas.
04. Artists employing refugees to make lampshades at an international biennale, later exhibited at Versailles, abuse the suffering of others for their own gain.
05. These 'artworks' have no efficacy as art and no social efficacy. They neither help refugees nor do they prevent similar disasters.
06. The shock value of the emotionally provocative theme is treated as a sign of a work's relevance.
07. 'Relevant', according to the Culture Industry, is that which is covered by 'the media' – which are equally degraded and controlled by a focus on spectacle and entertainment.
08. The art world ignorantly turns its back on the unprecedented rise in complexity over the last few decades, the rise in the availability of information and unprecedented access to knowledge.

09. Instead of reflecting on and truly addressing this complexity and the essence of our time –as expressed in the fundamental paradigm shifts in our understanding of the nature of reality as developed in the realm of science, philosophy and art since the late 1800s – the art world regresses instead into a complete infantilisation of art, artist and audience, providing nothing but spectacle and entertainment.
10. Artistic freedom in this Culture Industry is equated and confused with either arbitrary choices or freedom of speech.
11. Freedom -of artist and art- is first and foremost (mis)understood as something that is granted externally.
12. It is not understood as a work-intrinsic potential and quality and not understood as the potential which an individual holds within.
13. Censorship, whether Soviet-style or by taste or convention etc., is today replaced with censorship through the promotion of standardised art -art as entertainment, spectacle and currency- on a global scale.
14. The debate about whether, for example, artistic freedom is restricted if the audience demands the removal of ‚politically incorrect‘ content from a gallery space, is flawed and misplaced.
15. It measures the artist’s and the work’s freedom according to art-external standards (political correctness/ incorrectness in art) which the Culture Industry has established as absolute.
16. The logic applied here is that, if art and artists are really free, then to prove this ‚freedom‘ the artist must not only be –in principle- free to say whatever he or she wants but s/he must express exactly that which is most provocative – such as politically incorrect/rightwing views, for example. Yet this is merely making a – pointless and childish- point about the freedom of speech, and does not even remotely touch on the true individual freedom and autonomy which an individual is capable of developing through autonomous art.
17. The demand that the artist **MUST** be ‚free‘ to say anything is Janus-faced, showing only its alleged democratic face to the media, the journalists and critics who all love to get embroiled in and hyped-up by the provocation, quoting each other in endless circles. **In the glare of the spectacle, they are blinded to the fact that the nature of the freedom of speech is essentially different from the nature of artistic freedom.**
18. The call for total freedom of expression – the demand that the artist can say whatever s/he likes- in art, under close inspection, turns out to limit freedom.



19. **Just as the call for a democratisation of art has, paradoxically, not increased, but catastrophically undermined diversity and difference, has led to an unprecedented standardisation of art and suppression of true individuality, autonomy and freedom, in the same way the demand for an absolute freedom of speech in art devalues and undermines difference/that which is specific and free.**
20. The demand for an absolute freedom of expression in art is a demand for an absolute rule of the law of sameness, of a total equality of everything, everyone and every idea.
21. Every-one is an artist. Every-thing is art. Whatever the artist says must automatically be art.
22. Every content and opinion must be accepted as the content of art in order to prove the absolute freedom of art.
23. This demand is part and parcel of the Culture Industry's mechanisms and perverted logic – instead of extending the boundary of art, it reins art in and smothers difference, quality, substance and freedom.
24. Adorno and Horkheimer had analysed and highlighted (with hitherto unparalleled poignancy and from as early as the 1920s) the direct link between mass manipulation/the evisceration of individuals at the hands of the Culture Industry and the rise of right-wing fascism. Any right-wing views (whether expressed by contemporary artists (4) or anybody else) and any rise in fascist ideology must be examined in this context.
25. **For artists, critics and audience to consider the question whether the expression of right-wing views in contemporary art must be allowed in order to guarantee or prove the freedom of artist and art is the epitome and the most literal and perverse manifestation of the Culture Industry's success.**
26. It illustrates the degree to which artists, critics and audience are oblivious to the Culture Industry's existence and impact.
27. It illustrates the collective confusion and the loss of an understanding of what substantiates individual or artistic freedom/ what it actually means for an artist/an individual to be truly free, self-determined and autonomous.
28. The absolute rule of democratisation and political correctness as a standard in art since the late 1960s has established the ultimate ,triumph of a repressive égalité' (Adorno) which has helped to turn art, the very realm in society purporting to be responsible for the promotion of creativity,

individuality and freedom, into the ultimate industry and tool of mass manipulation and suppression.

29. **The global Culture Industry -as a major driver of economies- is a selfperpetuating system outside of anyone's control. It has become autonomous itself.**
30. ...
31. Just as with each increase in the standard of living the powerlessness of the individual increases (5), in the same way the oversimplification of the production of art increases the individual's impotence.
32. Just as the ‚increase‘ in the ‚standards of living‘ removes human beings from nature/ seeks to ‚pad‘ human beings against the impact of raw nature (and ultimately the threat of death), the convenience resulting from the oversimplification of art production disempowers nature within us – the raw power of thought.
33. Our catastrophic relationship with nature, the ruthless domination and exploitation of our very foundation, goes hand-in-hand with the evisceration of our own human nature.
34. Out-of-control industries destroying the natural world are complemented by a now obscenely successful and global Art- and Culture Industry which attacks, suffocates and disables the very individual freedom and autonomy that would be required to avert our own destruction.
35. ...

## References

1. „I admit that I spend more time on trying to understand record sums paid on the art market than on thinking about criteria for good art.“/ „Ich gebe gerne zu, dass auch ich mehr Zeit damit verbringe, Rekordpreise des Kunstmarkts zu verstehen als über Kriterien für gute Kunst nachzudenken.“ Wolfgang Ullrich, Culture Critic,<https://http://www.perlentaucher.de/essay/wolfgangullrich-ueber-das-schisma-in-der-kunstweltund-das-superkunstjahr-2017.html> (<http://www.perlentaucher.de/essay/wolfgangullrich-ueber-das-schisma-in-der-kunstweltund-das-superkunstjahr-2017.html>).
2. „Thus the artworks of many right-leaning artists, paradoxically, do not represent rightwing ideas.“/“Paradoxerweise dient die Kunst vieler rechts stehender Künstler also gerade nicht dazu, rechte Thesen zu veranschaulichen‘ aus: ‚Auf dunkler Scholle‘, Wolfgang Ullrich,

[https://epaper.zeit.de/\(https://epaper.zeit.de/\)webreader-v3/index.html#/870489/42](https://epaper.zeit.de/(https://epaper.zeit.de/)webreader-v3/index.html#/870489/42)

3. [...] The ideal of the autonomy of art has been surrendered. One sees the promise of more relevance by linking art with other areas which will enrich art through the social functions of those fields. [...] Autonomous art in comparison appears as a mere euphemism for impotence which one can dispense with [...].“ Wolfgang Ullrich: „Zwischen Deko und Diskurs“ (2017), perlentaucher.de.
4. In this article, Wolfgang Ullrich draws attention to a couple of recent examples of German artists who express right-wing views – thus, inadvertently, provides them with a platform and a place within the public debate: [https://www.perlentaucher.de/essay/\(https://www.perlentaucher.de/essay/\)wolfgang-ullrich-ueber-das-schisma-in-derkunstwelt-und-das-superkunstjahr-2017.html](https://www.perlentaucher.de/essay/(https://www.perlentaucher.de/essay/)wolfgang-ullrich-ueber-das-schisma-in-derkunstwelt-und-das-superkunstjahr-2017.html)
5. „[...] subjects accept the existing development, which renders them a degree more powerless with each prescribed increase in their standard of living.“ Dialectic of Enlightenment, T.W.Adorno & M.Horkheimer, Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 30

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