



Art, Performance, and Outsourcing in Corporate Art Commissioning: An American Scenario

Charlotte Gould

► To cite this version:

Charlotte Gould. Art, Performance, and Outsourcing in Corporate Art Commissioning: An American Scenario. European journal of American studies, 2023, 18 (2), 10.4000/ejas.19735 . hal-04189589

HAL Id: hal-04189589

<https://hal.science/hal-04189589>

Submitted on 28 Aug 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Art, Performance, and Outsourcing in Corporate Art Commissioning: An American Scenario

Charlotte Gould



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/19735>

DOI: 10.4000/ejas.19735

ISSN: 1991-9336

Publisher

European Association for American Studies

Electronic reference

Charlotte Gould, "Art, Performance, and Outsourcing in Corporate Art Commissioning: An American Scenario", *European journal of American studies* [Online], 18-2 | 2023, Online since 30 July 2023, connection on 19 July 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/19735> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.19735>

This text was automatically generated on 19 July 2023.



Creative Commons - Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International - CC BY-NC 4.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Art, Performance, and Outsourcing in Corporate Art Commissioning: An American Scenario

Charlotte Gould

1. Art and Business: Reclaiming Territories

- 1 In 2009, British artist Carey Young introduced a corporate slogan into a couple of American museums. Her vinyl textual work, installed directly onto the concrete wall of the museum entrance at the Contemporary Art Museum, St Louis, as well as on the wall of one of the rooms at the Dallas Museum of Art, was called *It's for You*. The statement, which points to its own contrived casualness by doing away with punctuation and capital letters, reads thus: "friendly honest straightforward refreshing dynamic." In the well-known art tradition of the Duchampian readymade, this typically corporate statement of brand values was appropriated from telecoms giant Orange by the artist. Work terminology and rhetoric, when they leave the corporate environment and enter the space of the museum, are suddenly revealed as a form of newspeak, a series of concepts masquerading as their opposites. The positive adjectives which seem fraudulent in the context of business because of the latter's primarily commercial agenda, suddenly regain some authenticity when they enter the white cube of the contemporary art museum and are associated with artistic creation. This is what Carey Young is interested in: revealing what happens when the two worlds permeate each other.
- 2 The dialogue between art and business is one which, surprisingly or not, often uses the same vocabulary, all the while referencing signifieds which are polar opposites. What this article will focus on is a mirror image of the first work we have just described, Young's *It's for You*, and of the artist-museum-corporation triangulation: the moment when big corporations bring artists into their offices. Indeed, this interface is one both businesses and artists have increasingly become enthralled with. Partnerships have

been struck which are presented as mutually beneficial, in the long-established form of corporate philanthropy or sponsorship, but where it is in fact difficult to clearly identify who is instrumentalizing whom and who is parasitizing whom.

- 3 In an information and experience-based economy, new commonalities have appeared between business and art, and their boundaries have almost dissolved as productivity is more and more equated with creativity. Some high-profile artists who have worked to become brands such as Beeple, or Damien Hirst—who, unlike Beeple, was never a digital artist to start with—have opted to foreground the commercial element of their practice by making the marketplace an element of their art and by using the new medium/asset of the NFT. But other artists still aspire to fight the system and short-circuit capitalism. Still, the latter face a difficult choice when it comes to the type of tactics to adopt: should they opt for direct denunciation, imitation, disturbance, or discretion? Tactical engagement with the marketplace is difficult when the marketplace's hold is expanding and when artists' creativity is another one of the commons highjacked by its all-consuming capacity to appropriate and monetize. Still, it is sometimes more important for art to claim sites and territories than to consolidate forms. The exploration of reality rather than its representation has preoccupied many artists since the end of the 20th century. We will see that, in the case of art's dealings with the corporate workplace, territories sometimes have to be reclaimed rather than simply claimed because of how business has impinged on the creative world.
- 4 Young's 2001 survey exhibition was called "Business as Usual," and was described as drawing parallels between the dematerialization of contemporary art and that of 21st-century business. Artist and writer John Kelsey has tried to pinpoint the ways in which artistic highjacking, as practiced by Carey Young, means integrating into the operations of the economy at large in such an insidious manner that the artist almost disappears. Only by acting like a chameleon is she able to first engage, and then, if successful, contaminate the corporate world. Kelsey explains thus the necessity for this tactical approach:

While art has no monopoly on creativity, it remains our 'change agent' par excellence, prized less for the objects or images it produces than for the flexibility of its processes, its playfulness, and its capacity to conjure up difference where everything is the same. But what if art chose to stop being different, or attempted to experience sameness in a different way? This is how we start to imagine an art that negotiates away the last traces of its otherness in order to become imperceptible and integrate itself all the more insidiously into the operations of the economy at large. And as it negotiates, as it starts to work and lose itself all at the same time, it is suddenly picking up speed, opening up new subjective territories we've never seen before, and contaminating all the other processes it engages. (Kelsey 32)

- 5 Why is it that when corporations have initiated and funded partnerships and collaborations, some of the artists who have taken up that offer have decided to respond by delivering contamination?

2. Artists in Residence

- 6 In recent research, I have been interested in the way British art has been commissioned and financed since the Thatcher years: how corporate sponsorship of contemporary art has become an increasingly common phenomenon, replacing or matching

governmental sources of funding, all the while altering the sites and functions of the artwork, while, in turn, the corporate sponsor receives the benefits of publicity, tax breaks, and cultural capital. A recent publication of mine was on the Artangel Trust and the intermediation they accomplish as an independent art commissioning agency in the United Kingdom (Gould, *Artangel*). While I am not best placed as a researcher to discuss American art, I have observed how northern American models have been instrumental in shaping, first, the consensual cultural policies of public funding introduced in Britain in the wake of World War II, and, then, how they have been even more influential in shaping a post-consensus agenda geared towards corporate sponsorship since the early 1980s (Gould, “The ‘Sensation’ exhibition”).

- 7 When looking into the way some performance artists have engaged with a corporate environment and how the eminently intermedial artistic form of performance, with its alternative meaning of production yield and effectiveness, seems to have resonated with the economic world, one perceives how interwoven the two domains might have become. Business has indeed maximized this association through sponsorship of course, but also by capitalizing on the work ethic and entrepreneurial skills it has identified in the art world. Again, because we are taking into account the two meanings of the word performance, the artistic genre and the economic objective, we can note that performance management—the monitoring and improving of efficiency—is largely the result of advances in the theory of management in the United States, and of the export of American business models like the Deming Management Method to Western Europe and the world since World War II, and so it makes sense to approach the phenomenon from that side of the Atlantic.
- 8 Historical examples from the 1960s present the placement of artists in a work environment first and foremost as productive experimental trials: this was the case for Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT, founded in 1966) of which Robert Rauschenberg was part in the US, and with the Artist Placement Group (APG, also launched in 1966) in the UK with artists John Latham and Barbara Steveni, and their seminal slogan “Context is half the work.” Both EAT and APG posited that artists were isolated in the gallery system and that, as a human resource, they were underused by society when their presence could in fact bring something new to industry, government, commerce, and business. The resurgence today in artist and business engagement—and more particularly the engagement between technology enterprises and artists—tends to demonstrate that they are indeed not such unlikely bedfellows. While in the 1960s performance art was seen as fundamentally different from the sort of art that could be collected or shown within the walls of mainstream art galleries—it was live, and its ephemerality challenged entrenched notions of art based on artistic skill, medium specificity, and market value—today, performance art’s usually delegated nature (Bishop), namely the fact that the artists often employ other professionals or members of the public to enact the performance they have devised, overlaps with, but also disrupts other forms of dematerialized production.
- 9 It can be argued that, properly understood, performance never was a medium, that it is not something an artwork can be, but rather a set of questions and concerns about how art relates to people and to the wider world. Performance could be considered as a tool used by artists to reflect on relational questions. The history of artistic performance is associated with American cultural practices of the 1960s and the seminal writings of RoseLee Goldberg which brought together “art media” and “life media,” in a radical

way. This radicality can be exemplified by Chris Burden being photographed being shot in the arm, by Adrian Piper defying gender expectations with her male alter ego, or by Marina Abramović risking bodily harm by allowing the—mostly male—members of the public to use any of the objects at their disposal to touch her. But today performance has come to be seen more as a set of strategies available to contemporary artists, one that is not inherently different from other art forms. What is more, performance—as both live actions and recorded and collected iterations—has in recent years become a major display and acquisition priority for art galleries and museums.

- 10 Performance can be understood as a specific genre, but also as a way of experimenting with the body in opposition to the commodifiable forms of painting and sculpture, and of enlarging the frame around the work of art, long considered a discrete material object, to also include the active presence of its maker and its viewers. Often used in the adjectival form “performative,” it disrupts prevailing definitions of authorship and ownership, of skill, and even of agency. By opening up to a more pervasive conceptual attitude of performativity it has resonated in the context of both the creative industries and the experience economy (as theorized by B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore).
- 11 There are quite a few examples of very prominent companies inviting artists to come and work on their premises, usually relying on the traditional format of artist residencies by providing grants and on-site studio space. Amazon’s Artist in Residence Program was founded in 2016 and accommodates artists on their campuses in either Bellevue or Seattle over ten weeks. The Xerox PARC Artist-in-Residence program gives artists working with new media full access to their 3D printers at the company’s interdisciplinary Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) with the postulation that it can work as a hothouse where innovation will naturally emerge from the cohabitation of two sorts of creative people (Finley+Muse and Margaret Crane took part in the residency). The Facebook artist residency (FB AIR), which was launched in 2012 at the company’s Menlo Park campus by artist and Facebook shareholder Drew Bennett, has let artists both observe and create on site, using their huge corridors to design murals for example (this was the choice intervention of many residents, among them Serena Mitnik-Miller, Thomas Wold, or David Choe). Facebook’s approach focuses more clearly on improving their employees’ direct environment. But the company also highlights the same “creative hothouse” argument by making sure these employees are exposed to different ways of seeing and thinking “thereby creating an atmosphere that has the potential to yield positive and productive results” (Bamberger). Although artists are told they are absolutely free to do just what they want, the expectation is still that by observing the ways in which artists create and present their work, Facebook workers will be able to enhance their own innovative skills and production abilities. Finally, Google Labs AIR, or Google Arts and Culture, allows access to the Google Lab, coordinated by star curator Hans Ulrich Obrist for ten-week residencies, and provides them with ultra-high-definition cameras. TiltBrush AIR is another one of their programs which provides access to their virtual reality tool of the same name, a digital brush which allows you to draw in 3D space. Jenny Odell’s 2016 intervention on their data centre in Mayes County, Oklahoma, entitled *The Data Center Mural Project*, for example, was meant to draw attention to the often-overlooked imposing physical and material presence of the internet.
- 12 All these artist-in-residence (AIR) programs raise the profile and hipness of the companies which organize and fund them. But there are also horror stories for

companies, as for example this situation when two artificial intelligence ethics researchers revealed that in 2016, tech and retail giant Amazon had patented a metal enclosure for transporting workers around its warehouses, creating a highly automated workplace environment (Crawford and Joler). The revelation sent a shockwave the world over when people realised that one of the largest companies in the world, admittedly one whose dubious labour practices are public knowledge, had designed an actual cage for its workers. Amazon never actually built the device, and its executives even recognised it was a bad idea, even though they insisted the cage was meant as protection from falling parcels. But unfortunately for them, artist Simon Denny turned it into an artwork, a 3D model of a blueprint for Amazon's cage called *Amazon Worker Cage*, 2019.

- 13 This was a clear example of the two worlds clearly being at loggerheads. But AIR programs usually find ways of benefitting from the artistic outlook of their beneficiaries and are therefore encouraged. In these programs, creativity is foregrounded as a way of thinking outside the box, of not being normative. Yet, this can be a difficult negotiation for both.

3. The American Model of Performance Management

- 14 Other ways of infiltrating the world of business exist besides being an artist in residence. It is indeed possible to adopt its codes while also resisting the appropriation of being commissioned or hired. To achieve this, artists have opted to be residents who are also observers, employees, or trainees. This means that they have opted for the medium of performance—rather than the many murals we have mentioned—whose expanded field of action and focus on interpersonal interaction allows them to blend in and go native. Because both artist and worker now often operate in an environment where they no longer create objects but provide services and manage interpersonal exchanges, art has, to the surprise of many, been associated with the type of labor which is valorized within a framework which has been called neoliberal—an extensive term emerging in the 1980s to criticize globalization, fiscal austerity, and the privatization of common goods.
- 15 The art of management is no longer simply a metaphor for many economists who encourage businesspeople to not simply tolerate artists among them, but to regard art as a tool bringing disruptive inspiration to organizations so they can increase their innovative capacities. This is why a program like Deloitte Consulting's Art Think has presented performance as a model of creative thinking for analysts and consultants, helping them work more harmoniously with colleagues, or deal with uncertainty. In 2012, the New York branch of leading consulting firm Deloitte launched a series of monthly workshops in which artists were invited to discuss their work with Deloitte employees. The idea was to encourage Deloitte staff members to approach their work for the firm as a form of creative activity similar to art. As the press release announced, Art Think is "intended to spark new perspectives on the consulting practice, by looking at how artists ideate and innovate." To demonstrate the relevance of such a program for financial consultants, the same terms were used to describe artists and Deloitte employees. Both were said to "implement solutions," "interact with collaborators," "deal with uncertainty," "innovate alternatives to pre-existing models," and "create

within a set of restraints” (Deloitte Consulting). Interestingly, none of these activities concern creating objects, they all concern immaterial labor.

- 16 It therefore comes as no surprise that the first artist to take part in the Deloitte Art Think was a New York-based performance artist, Ryan McNamara, who was known for a piece he had created at PS1 called *Make Ryan a Dancer* (2010) in which he called upon professional dancers to teach him their moves, to mostly underwhelming effect. At Deloitte, the artist decided to engage with different employees in the manner of a researcher, a sociologist, or an anthropologist. In doing so, he embodies all the ideal personable qualities encouraged by the New Management ideology which had started to emerge in the 1980s and has been extensively analyzed by Norman Fairclough, and Eve Chiapello and Luc Boltanski in their seminal 1999 *Nouvel esprit du capitalisme*. A draft PowerPoint presentation of Deloitte’s Art Think (which was not a public document) indicates that “Ryan embodies the ‘dealing with uncertainty’ and ‘enthusiasm for experiments’ aspects of design thinking.”
- 17 New Management had taken a hold on the American corporate world, but also beyond by expanding to Europe, and to public management, more specifically the public management of the creative field. In Britain, both the cultural policies of Thatcherism and New Labour were described as neoliberal because they both encouraged the increasingly corporate sponsorship of culture, but also because they started running public sector cultural institutions as though they were private businesses, thus demonstrating either a desire for more efficiency, or some level of distrust of the public sector. The support given to the creative industries and, through tax breaks, to its private supports by the Labour government in particular was perceived as something of a Trojan Horse, aimed more at promoting economic and managerial practices within cultural policy, than at supporting culture itself. The New Public Management (NPM) mechanisms, and their stress on private sector management styles and on performance, were introduced by Margaret Thatcher, who viewed herself as a “policy entrepreneur” (Hood). The same program concerned with stimulating entrepreneurship within the civil service was continued and extended under New Labour under the “Modernizing Government” agenda and led to accusations of “targetolatry,” a supposed obsession with numerical objectives imposed from the top. Still some commentators, like Janet Newman, have argued that this program was completely different in intention and practice and had a real impact on the meaning of targets within the governmental system (Newman). New governance, whether NPM or modernization, relies on strategic planning, auditing, the introduction of performance indicators, and target setting, all instruments supposed to be more reliable and objective than subjective aesthetic judgments.

4. The Infiltration Tactic

- 18 The allure of performance art for Deloitte would also have lain in the former’s rejection of objectification which paralleled the political objections to Fordism in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Michael Hardt, many sectors of the global economy then started to adopt modes of production which had artistic qualities. They were “informational and image-oriented” (176). For Deloitte, McNamara provided an ideal model of persevering work ethic, and of performance.

- 19 Sami Siegelbaum's "Business Casual, Flexibility in Contemporary Performance Art" sheds a crucial light on Deloitte's interaction with artists. He explains that the characterization of McNamara later contrasted sharply with another work done for Art Think, Pilvi Takala's *The Trainee*, whose "unorthodox performance of immaterial labor is more troubling and alienating within the work environment" (64). Takala is known for her 2009 filmed performance *The Real Snow White* in which she is thrown out of Disneyland Paris for wearing a Snow White costume. For *The Trainee*, she was again identified as a possible worker at an organization, Deloitte's Helsinki office, before being disqualified for not being "the real thing."
- 20 The end result of *The Trainee* were elements of the standard media of the corporate environment (PowerPoint, e-mails, office furniture, employee ID cards) presented in the context of the museum. But the performance itself was one which felt awkward and disappointing for the workers at Deloitte who believed her to be a new colleague called Johanna. Indeed, while Takala was performing as an artist commissioned by Deloitte, she was clearly underperforming as an employee as evidenced by the e-mails sent by "Johanna's" frustrated coworkers to the supervisor informing them that she was simply sitting at her desk without a computer gazing into the distance, or travelling up and down on the elevator, simply telling anyone who asked her what she was doing that she was engaged in "brain work." Sam Siegelbaum links the reactions of her unsuspecting colleagues to the context of a post-Taylorist work environment: "They reveal the ways in which worker discipline is no longer administered by superiors, as in the Taylorist model, but has instead become a system of collective self-management diffused throughout the labor force. The troubled interoffice e-mails sent to supervisors note Johanna's 'weird and funny, but also scary' inactivity" (55).

5. Performance and ("Scary") Non-Participation

- 21 The political dynamic between participation and performance is one which has been clearly dissected in the influential recent writings of Claire Bishop and which Sutra Bala encourages to now gear towards subtle refusal:
- Participation is the utopian sweet dream that has turned into a nightmare in contemporary neoliberal societies. Yet can the participatory ideal be discarded or merely replaced with another term, just because it has become disemboweled into a tool of pacification? The gestures of participatory art insist that the concept of participation must be re-imagined and shifted onto other registers. Moving from reflections on institutional critique and impact to concrete analyses of moments of unsolicited, delicate participation and refusal. (52)
- 22 Bala's comment is of course reminiscent of Bishop's criticism of the almost systematic recourse to delegation in participatory art (in which she opposes her American colleague Grant Kester), and of the naturalisation of outsourced unpaid work (Bishop indeed at some point compares the use by artists of audience participation to exploitative internships). The 2,400 members of the public invited to take part in Antony Gormley's 2009 proposal for a temporary installation on Trafalgar Square's fourth plinth entitled *One and Other*, or the school children Jeremy Deller invited to enjoy an inflatable version of Stonehenge called *Sacrilege* in 2012 were moments of entertainment for these unpaid participants. But when Deller reenacted *The Battle of Orgreave* in 2001, he paid the participants, themselves former miners and policemen, whose history and authenticity he was drawing from to comment on the famous

industrial dispute. Pushing the envelope of outsourced authenticity much further is Spanish artist Santiago Sierra who infamously and provocatively hired prostitutes and political refugees to adopt uncomfortable positions, or to have their bodies tattooed while taking part in his performances.

- 23 Art performances can therefore provide both a blueprint for an ideal form of organizational management, and a critical take on corporate culture as well as on the alignment of art and finance. By bringing out both the convergence of performance art and work performance, and their contradistinction, Takala's *The Trainee* satisfies both its corporate patron and art critics. Another performance by Takala which she presented in a London co-working space called Second Home in 2018, *The Stroker*, provided the same disruption to a type of workspace which itself has been described by economists as "a tool for building a creative ecosystem," and "a driver of the post-Fordist city" (Bednar and Danko). In *The Stroker*, Takala intervened over two weeks at the trendy East London flexible office by introducing herself as Nina Nieminen, a wellness consultant hired by the company to provide touching services in the workplace. She would pace up and down the corridors, greeting and lightly touching the people she encountered, to their great puzzlement.
- 24 Jenny Odell, whom we mentioned earlier as the artist who created a mural for one of Google's data centres in Oklahoma, published a bestselling book in 2019 entitled *How to Do Nothing*, which defends inactivity and unproductivity as a bulwark against capitalist productivity, but she insists on the fact that the stakes of not doing anything, of not providing deliverables, are cultural. Resisting productivity through performance is therefore first and foremost a way of retrieving the territories of art which have been annexed by new management.
- 25 Sami Siegelbaum's article "Business Casual, Flexibility in Contemporary Performance Art" explains perfectly well the difference between McNamara and Takala's interventions for Deloitte's Art Think. In it, he explains that management literature increasingly emphasized creativity, innovation, and motivation, rather than efficiency, professionalism, and motivation at a time when the service industries proliferated. The globally integrated economy started developing a more flexible management structure to increase performance, rather than production:

[I]n the roughly two decades following World War II, as most large American firms separated the functions of ownership and management, 'performance' became the central category in the evaluation of labor. In explicit distinction from the Taylorist focus on disciplinary control of worker activity, which dominated work appraisal in the first half of the twentieth century, firms and organizations in the United States during the 1960s and in Europe during the 1970s began to focus more on the development of worker initiative and self-management. This shift in the meaning of organizational performance was extended to various sectors of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s as US and Western European firms relocated their manufacturing operations to newly industrializing countries. (3)
- 26 The institutionalization of new management happened first within the United States before it subsequently spread worldwide. Siegelbaum confirms this geographical origin and its link to the economic circumstances of the 1970s:

In response to the stagnant growth that beset the economy by the mid-1970s, firms began to restructure their operations and press for deregulatory policies that would enable them to shed or bypass their obligations to workers and lower labor costs. Implementations such as outsourcing, flex-time, subcontracting, and freelancing radically limited the in-house operations of firms and reorganized

production from a ladder-like structure of largely repetitive tasks and into networks of various temporary projects. In order to justify the loss of security such transformations induced for workers, firms drew on the very forms of critique of Fordist capitalism most vigorously expressed by artists, students, the counterculture, and other groups associated with the New Left that denounced the repressive hierarchy, alienation, and homogenization forced on individuals by an industrialized world. The new work structures were thus hailed for promoting individual initiative, creativity, and a sense of purpose. But as the awkwardness surrounding Johanna attests, both performing and non-performing bodies have a stubborn materiality, an inertia that when awkwardly asserted presents an obstacle to the flexibility of dematerialized flows of information, finance, affect, and creativity in the post-Taylorist era of hyper-performance. (62)

- 27 This interest in an artistic approach was not confined to management, and also affected other sectors such as real estate development, something which has famously been championed by Richard Florida. In the 2000s, artistic creativity seemed to have become the standard for all post-Fordist economic activity. Claire Bishop, in her article “Black Box, White Cube,” in fact points to a mutual dependence, with work performance aligning on art performance, but also art performance finding vindication in the global economic context:

Performance studies, by contrast, have been predictably less anxious about spectacle, and instead read the resurgence of artistic interest in performance, and the performative turn of culture more generally, through theories of post-Fordist labor. As Jon McKenzie argues in *Perform or Else* (2001), neoliberal economies are fixated on performance as an index of evaluation; performance has become the regulatory ideal of our time, replacing Foucault’s idea of disciplinary surveillance. Performance theorists have turned to Italian post-Workerist theory as a framework for contemporary performance, and conversely, Italian post-Workerists have turned to performance to account for post-Fordist labor practices.” (23)

- 28 When the basis of labor is no longer the production of a material commodity, as at the end of a production line, but a piece of information, all workers become performers.
- 29 In 2006, Daniel Pink, a business management guru and speechwriter for Al Gore, published a book which made a surprising claim. *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future* famously argued that the Master in Fine Arts (MFA) degree had become the new Master in Business Administration (MBA). For Pink, managers should stop trying to achieve productivity and instead start producing concepts and even emotions, not in order to challenge capitalism, but because it is economically beneficial. This alignment of business and creativity has been critiqued by many, among them Jon McKenzie, whom Claire Bishop mentions, but also by Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray, and Ulf Wuggenig, and by Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter who lament the way performance is today appraised just like output, or still by Gregory Sholette who in 2020 wrote an article whose title sounds like an indictment: “Art Worker, Art Worker, What Have you Done? From the dematerialization of art, to the materialization of the neoliberal creative worker, 1968-1977.” These are the calls to caution artists like Carey Young and Pilvi Takala have heeded when trying to deflect corporate absorption through tactics of contamination.

6. Conclusion

- 30 The current valorisation of art and culture as major economic players, but also of the more abstract notion of “creativity,” reveals how this last term does not have a

systematically ethical foundation and can be hijacked to support market-oriented ideologies on the one hand, and to be shamelessly deployed to plug gaps in social policy on the other. While art was becoming a creative industry at the turn of the century, industry in turn was becoming increasingly creative, with artists being considered as what art historian Miwon Kwon has called “valuable service providers of subversion” (Kwon 47-51). Sami Siegelbaum insists on a shared genealogy between the rise of immaterial labour in post-Fordist American capitalism after the Second World War and the rise of an initially oppositional, anti-normative artistic practice, that of performance art, which became the object of recuperation by the world of business. For Siegelbaum, performance art and corporate management discourse emerged as parallel responses to the political challenges of post-war capitalism in the late 1960s. While many performance artists have suggested ways of resisting the claims laid on their practice by the corporate world, business seems to have been able to accommodate even the most critical approaches of the performance artists they commission. This accommodation is the indication of the further development of private sponsorship’s grip on the cultural institutions they sponsor, often under the oxymoronic term “corporate philanthropy” – oxymoronic because philanthropy should be about giving without expecting anything in return: in corporate sponsorship, the returns are huge. In the case of Pilvi Takala’s *The Trainee*, the intermediation offered by the company and which the artist strives to resist might in fact have been achieved by a third party: the museum. The Deloitte-sponsored Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, where the piece was first exhibited in 2008, acted essentially as a middleman or contracting agency by bringing the artist and the corporation together for the project. This sanctioned the strategic artwashing and branding of Deloitte as an open, possibly self-critical, cool company able to accommodate the criticism it has itself commissioned.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bala, Sruti. *The Gestures of Participatory Art*. Manchester UP, 2018.

Bamberger, Alan. “The Facebook Artist in Residence Program. Art and the Corporate Life.” <https://www.artbusiness.com/facebook-artist-in-residence-program.html>. Accessed 6 June 2023.

Bednar, Pavel and Lukas Danko. “Coworking Spaces as a Driver of the Post-Fordist City: a Tool for Building a Creative Ecosystem.” *European Spatial Research and Policy*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2020, pp. 105-125.

Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Verso, 2012.

---. “Delegated Performance, Outsourcing Authenticity.” *October*, no. 140, 2012, pp. 91-112.

---. “Black Box, White Cube, Gray Zone: Dance Exhibitions and Audience Attention.” *The Drama Review*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2018, pp. 22-42.

Crawford, Kate, and Vladan Joler. "Anatomy of an AI System: The Amazon Echo as an Anatomical Map of Human Labor, Data and Planetary Resources." AI Now Institute and Share Lab, September 7, 2018, <https://anatomyof.ai>. Accessed 6 June 2023.

Deloitte Consulting LLP. "Deloitte Consulting Hosts Contemporary Artists to Explore Problem Solving." Press release, April 2012.

Gould, Charlotte. *Artangel and Financing British Art: Adapting to Social and Economic Change*. Routledge, 2019.

---. "The 'Sensation' exhibition (London 1997-New York 2000): public scandals, private funding." *Tansatlantic Cultures*, 2022, <https://www.transatlantic-cultures.org/en/catalog/sensation-royal-academy-1997-et-brooklyn-museum-1999-une-collection-contemporaine-privee-a-l-epruve-de-deux-musees>. Accessed 6 June 2023.

Hardt, Michael. "Immaterial Labor and Artistic Production." *Rethinking Marxism*, vol.17, no. 2, 2005, pp. 175-177.

Hood, Christopher. "A Public Management for all Seasons?" *Public Administration*, vol. 69 no. 1, 1991, pp. 3-19.

Kelsey, John. "Adventures in Capitalism." *Carey Young, Incorporated*, edited by Alex Farquharson, Jeremy Millar, John Kelsey, Liam Gillick and Steven Bode, Film & Video Umbrella, 2002, pp. 29-33.

Kelsey, John and Aleksandra Mir, eds. *Corporate Mentality*. MIT P, 2001.

Kwon, Miwon. *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. MIT P, 2004.

Lovink, Geert, and Ned Rossiter. *MyCreativity Reader: A Critique of Creative Industries*. Institute of Network Cultures, 2007.

McKenzie, John. *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*. Routledge, 2001.

Newman, Janet, "The New Public Management, Modernization and Institutional Change. Disruptions, disjunctures and dilemmas." *New Public Management: Current Trends and Future Prospects*, edited by Kathleen McLaughlin, Stephen P. Osborne and Ewan Ferlie, Routledge, 2002, pp. 77-91.

Odell, Jenny. *How to Do Nothing. Resisting the Attention Economy*. Melville House, 2019.

Pink, Daniel. *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*. Riverhead, 2006.

Raunig, Gerald, Gene Ray, and Ulf Wuggenig, eds. *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity, and Resistance in the "Creative Industries"*. Mayfly, 2011.

Sholette, Gregory. *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*. Pluto Press, 2011.

Siegelbaum, Sami. "Business Casual, Flexibility in Contemporary Performance Art." *Art Journal*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2013, pp. 50-65.

ABSTRACTS

At a time when corporate sponsorship of contemporary art has become increasingly widespread, allowing sponsors to enhance their brands and receive return on investment in the shape of tax breaks and publicity, business has maximized this association by also capitalizing on what it perceives as the work ethic and entrepreneurial skills of the art world. The art world has indeed become a benchmark of production and management for the business world which praises its ever-youthful energy, its inventiveness, hipness, and sense of freedom, its flexible working hours

and short-term or zero-hour contracts. Following the success of the creative industries, private companies have been keen to embrace this post-Fordist work model and link it to the global neoliberal market economy. This article looks into the way different performance artists have engaged with a corporate environment, but also more generally at the way art has navigated new relations with its economic context in recent years. And since performance management is largely the result of the export of American business models to Western Europe since World War II, it makes sense to look for the roots of this phenomenon on that side of the Atlantic.

INDEX

Keywords: performance art, sponsorship, corporate art commissioning, Taylorism, Post-Fordism

AUTHOR

CHARLOTTE GOULD

Charlotte Gould is Professor of British Studies at Université Paris Nanterre where she is a member of the research group CREA. The focus of her research is contemporary British art, and more specifically public art commissioning since the nineteen-eighties and environmental art practices. She is the author of *Artangel and Financing British Art* which came out with Routledge in 2019, and the co-director, with Sophie Mesplède, of *Marketing Art in Britain: A Cultural History* (Ashgate, 2012) and *British Art and the Environment* (Routledge, 2023).