René Berger

ART(S) AND POWER(S)

At first glance such a title seems antinomic. Obviously we accept the fact that there exists a relation, frequently conflictual, between the press and public authority, without mentioning other media; but art continues to represent, at least in the mind of the public, a privileged domain which, though subject to frequently abrupt and brutal changes, benefits nevertheless from an "innocence" distinguishing it from other activities. Visiting the Louvre in Paris, the Uffizi in Florence, or touring the Loire valley châteaux are all so-called cultural activities pursued "simply to develop the personality."

Despite the convulsions of modern art, which never cease to amaze, the attitude of an art lover remains constant: on the one hand he expects that what is offered to him under the label of work of art should awaken in him specific feelings, if not of beauty at least of delight. On the other hand he wants his feelings to be motivated, even with the help of explanations, by a quality which is proper to the work itself and which is of the order of art. In reality the practice of art seems to him to be an activity which is free of all utilitarian considerations, even if it deals with a utilitarian object—a piece of furniture, a palace, a monstrance: the objective is always the simple experience of beauty.

Translated by R. Scott Walker

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This "spontaneous" attitude is no different from that exercised by art historians, almost without exception, under the guise of science. Their task consists in the study of a particular class of objects through the course of time: architecture, painting, sculpture, even what was formerly called minor arts. Once a corpus has been established, which presumes problems of identification, attribution, dating, and influences, their efforts are aimed at extracting the characteristics of these works, often in the order of excellence which they attribute to them.

Such a way of doing can also be found in schools, if art has a place there, as well as in museums which arrange their holdings chronologically.

From Plato to Malraux aesthetics has attempted to elucidate the beautiful in definitions which, though multiple, all begin with the supposition that art is an *essence,* a concept repeated in some way in every fine arts system from Antiquity to our own times where attempts are made to define this essence in structures according to varying principles and modalities.

In short, both by the general public as well as by historians, essayists and aestheticians, art is considered to be a kind of "given" which belongs to the category of the Beautiful. Its manifestations in and through works of art are both objects of delight and of knowledge. In terms of aesthetic value, which is its expression, it evades both utilitarian grasp and conceptual formulation by entering a "pure" dimension to which only enjoyment and aesthetic judgement have access, themselves "pure" activities.

I do not deny the schematic nature of these introductory observations; they correspond, however, to the situation which still prevails in large measure today, and they permit me to expose an initial conclusion: namely, that in traditional conception and practice, the idea of power seems foreign, if not preposterous, to art.

The World of Art and its Agents

This situation has been called into question over recent decades by what is usually called contemporary art. Poorly understood by the general public, frequently obfuscated by those very persons

who take part in it, there are still effects so powerful that one can speak less of transformation than of mutation. In reality one could say that a new world has been born (an expression to which I will return). Although it is more complex, less harmonious and certainly void of "innocence," at least in large measure, it is the world in which we live, and it is the one which we should illuminate.

First of all, with a detour which might seem anecdotal, but which is the obligatory path of every living artist, imagine one of your friends decides to become a painter or sculptor and his works, which he has shown you, are attractive to you. This artist lives in Paris, in Lyon, in Marseilles, or in New York, in Bucharest or in Basel or Lausanne. (We shall see later that the list is not fortuitous). Is this art? For two persons at least, the artist and yourself, the answer is clear. For certain other friends, perhaps. Is this enough? Speaking absolutely it is tempting to answer in the affirmative. However, it is evident that such a hypothesis borders on the fantastic. To have the status of artist, in order that a work of art be received as such, it is obviously essential that someone engage in the act of painting or of sculpting (the necessary condition); but it is also necessary that the author and his creation obtain recognition in the public sphere and not just in his private circle (the sufficient condition).

Our "artist" (I am using the quotation marks to indicate his pre-status condition which ordinarily is not taken into consideration, but whose uncertainties, not to say torments, the candidate himself knows well), our "artist," then, is going to begin seeking, with or without your help, a "place to show," which means a "gallery," the first link in the art chain. But the gallery, far from being an "idealist" setting, dedicated to the assumption that art exists only for the pleasure of the public, is a business directed and managed by a dealer who, even if he has a taste for art (which we hope for him), is in business to make money. The economic goal, without being exclusive, is a determining factor for the simple reason that if the dealer were to lose sight of it, he would soon cease to exist.

In light of this banal example, the double condition of a

work of art can be rapidly understood: on the one hand it speaks to that part of the world of art which engages in aesthetic judgment (we expect it to produce something, from astonishment to scandal, an effect of the beautiful: there is also a scandalous beauty). On the other hand it enters into that part of the world of art which is the market place, decisive in our time, in which the work of art is bought and sold in accordance with a price set by the law of supply and demand.

This two-fold status makes the dealer inclined to practice a double activity: on the one hand to make known the artist whom he exhibits and theoretically appreciates; and, on the other, to heighten the value of his production by establishing prices which he hopes will continue to increase and for whose increase he is actively engaged. Promotion, according to the term now in use, requires him today not only to have a contagious enthusiasm whose essence is that it costs nothing, but also an arsenal of means whose essence, is, on the contrary, to be extremely expensive (*vernissages*, catalogues, posters, advertising, public relations, contacts with collectors and the press, etc.).

A *vernissage* is the operation by which the dealer invites on a given day those persons who, because of their various functions in the art world and the art market are likely to take part in the promotion of the exhibited artist. Far from being a simple formality, the *vernissage*, when examined more closely, is an operation which is similar to a "social game" (in the sense meant by Eric Berne,[1] up to von Neumann's and Morgenstern's *Theory of Games*.[2]) A game is, in fact, played on these occasions which, though not decisive, is at least important, and during this game the various players—friends

[1] Eric Berne *Games People Play*, New York, Grove Press, 1964. My reference is taken from the French translation *Des Jeux et des Hommes*, Paris, Stock, 1975, p. 15). "By extending the meaning it is possible to use the word 'caress' familiarly to designate any act which implies the recognition of the presence of another. Consequently a *caress* can serve as a fundamental unit of social action. An exchange of caresses creates a *transaction*, a unit of social relations.

"On the theoretical level, the principle which arises here is that any kind of social relation offers a biological advantage over the total absence of relations."

[2] John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1953.

of the artist or of the gallery, art lovers, collectors, critics and museum curators—engage in an exchange of "caresses"[3] proportionate to the social clout of the players (attention is lavished on the important collector, the influential critic is courted, the opinion of the curator who counts is sought with care...). The game as thus played out allows making calculations on how best to increase the stakes at the moment when sales will begin. This micro-operation, as anecdotal as it might seem, obeys rules of the art world and the art market on which depend in large part the fate of the artist: if he is a beginner, his public access to the artist status; if he is already confirmed, his degree of recognition and value. The powers at work during a *vernissage* are no less active for being diffuse and difficult to analyze. Word of mouth, rumors, little comments and jibes, the incisive phrase —all play a role in profits and losses.

A *vernissage* is thus a kind of transactional ritual out of which is expected the approval or disapproval of a beginning artist, or the elevation to a higher level of a confirmed artist.[4] Without this backing the game cannot be played, let alone won. Art may claim to deal with quality, but the artist will remain impoverished if society (the micro-society of the world of art) does not issue his identity papers. Unlike the legitimacy conferred ordinarily by appropriate authorities (political, legal, administrative), the legitimacy conferred on an artist by the world of art issues from a vague "institution," apparently without laws, but whose decrees are all the more rigorous for not being ex-

[3] In addition to personal "caresses" (words exchanged, gestures, listening attitudes, etc.) a *vernissage* includes a "convivial gratification" such as a buffet where can be found champagne, cocktails, fruit juices, which may or may not be accompanied by canapes, all depending on the importance of the event and its hosts; a special "gratification" is reserved for collectors who generally are treated to a pre-*vernissage*, a preview, at which they can admire and, if possible, buy before the public. Likewise a special gratification is reserved for friends (in the broad sense) in the form of a dinner. It may sound like I am making much ado about nothing, but when closely examined it is clear that these operations, subtly distributed, are part of the promotional system. This is why official exhibitions which generally involve an honorary committee must face up to difficulties of protocol which are not always easy to resolve: which ministers, which ambassadors, in what order? Protocol, the show window of political power, does not forgive blunders.

[4] Later I will define this notion of degree which distinguishes international, national, regional and local artists.

plicit, nor even seen as decrees. Here can be seen arising one of the most unique powers which exists, "cultural power," which is exercised by those who count in the world of art and whose effect is, over and above legitimacy, to produce fame. Crudely (or cruelly?) stated, an artist only exists if he is talked about, all the more so if those doing the talking are famous in their turn. As long as he has not succeeded in breaking the sound barrier, the artist is devoid of existence.

The resulting two-fold consequence can be guessed, and it emphasizes in advance the role and the importance of the media. For if knowledge is the business of the critic (I will explain this), "making known" is the business of publicity. Every artist is exposed to both of these, and he frequently tends to confuse them. Often he can be seen making overtures to both the enlightened connoisseur and to the passing journalist.

The objection will be raised that I am attaching too much importance to the *vernissage*. Wrong. First of all because it stands at the beginning of artistic production (the term production will be explained later); and then because underneath its innocent and mundane airs, it is the crucible which determines whether the event has "taken" or not. And finally because it is the point of interaction for all the major agents in the art world, the first of whom, the dealer, has just been seen in his triple role of artistic promoter, economic promoter and advertising agent.

Among the other agents, *collectors* occupy a key position. They are distinguished from art lovers by the fact that their purchases occur with a certain regularity and their choices are generally selective: a collector might be specialized in paintings or engravings, or show a preference for a certain artist, a certain period, a certain civilization, a certain geographic area. If an artist produces works which he can then exhibit with the aid of a gallery, it is obvious that they remain a sterile accumulation, destined rapidly for the scrap heap (which is sometimes or frequently the case) if they do not find a buyer at some point, often quite late (as in the classic example of Van Gogh). The collector thus plays the role of receiver of the work of art. The term should be clarified. Unlike other products which have receivers who are actually or potentially determined or pre-determined by

the nature of their specific needs, the work of art is exhibited and offered, at least at the beginning, with no pre-ordained destination. The collector is not a receiver in the ordinary sense of the term. He determines his own needs and desires. He takes the initiative by choosing a particular artist or a particular work. His motives fall into a category other than that of simple consumerism. By acquiring a work of art he gives it distinction and, in turn, is distinguished by it. This mutual distinction sets up a configuration which is determined and determining in the world of art: the act of purchasing denotes a demand which has an influence on the market; at the same time it is an element of social enhancement.

Unlike most products, which are characteristically manufactured in the largest possible quantities in order to be sold to the greatest possible number of consumers, works of art are not produced industrially. Even though artists are numerous, the art market restricts itself to a limited number of them only, those represented by the most important galleries. As a result, dealers and collectors work in a relatively narrow market, with as consequence the fact that the more a collector becomes attached to an artist, the more he attempts to promote his standing. This mechanism, barely different from that of the stock market, "naturally" inclines the collector to expect a proportional increase in the value of his investments, and possibly even more.

The work of art for him is thus the seat of two properties. On the one hand, when he looks at it or exhibits it, it is the source of aesthetic enjoyment, which he can exercise alone or which he can share, enjoyment which is all the greater because he is its owner.[5] On the other hand he can do with it as he

[5] This notion of property merits further development. Indeed, the plastic arts—painting, sculpture, engraving—are distinguished by the fact that they exist on *material supports*. Unlike other arts (theatre, ballet, concert, poetry) which unfold in time, they are by their very nature similar to movable objects which can be traded. Such objects must be neither too large nor too heavy, and they must be easily transportable. This is proven by the parallel market in stolen works. As far as I know, no one has ever stolen an opera or ballet in the material sense of the term. Likewise, with regard to the plastic arts, the theft of a cathedral or a church is impossible. On the other hand, traffic in paintings and sculptures is more than thriving. Theft activity in art works exactly delimits the field of the art market and the nature of the title of ownership.

wishes—exchange it, sell it, even destroy it. Unless he is simply a base profiteer, it is the first aspect, the artistic aspect, which he will emphasize in his use of it. This will mean for him, as I have said, a certain reputation, in accordance with his choices, of which he is generally more than a little proud. But as soon as he decides to make public use of his works, to turn them over to an auction sale, for example, obviously it is only the market value which enters into consideration. I know of no example of a collector agreeing to sell his works for the price paid for them when the value of the works had increased in the meantime.

This short sketch illuminates at least two kinds of powers to which art is subject because of collectors. First there is the social force from which derive appreciation and distinction (we speak rightly of "big" or "small" collectors). And then there is the economic force which organizes and controls the market. To this is added the "publicity" force—the rumors and information which influence the stock market represented by the "shares" of artists and their works.

At first glance it would seem to be completely different with regard to museums. The Louvre in Paris, the Uffizi in Florence, the National Gallery in London or the Metropolitan in New York are all pinnacles where, through the medium of art, visitors are sure of discovering images of Egypt, of Greece, of Rome, of China or Japan, or of being able to follow Western images through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and subsequent centuries. This is why the crowds are numerous, hundreds of thousands, even millions each year, sometimes coming from quite far, either individually or more often in groups. The conscious or unconscious feeling experienced by all is that museums, similar to libraries, preserve our collective memory, with the only difference being that instead of deciphering it from books, we are invited to discover it through sense impressions.

In recent decades *modern art museums* have emerged as a result of changes experienced or provoked by our world. Just as historical art museums have the role of presenting the faces of the past, modern art museums have the role of presenting the public and plural image of our age. We expect them—this is the prevailing sentiment—to establish a kind of continuity with previous art or, if such is not the case, that changes or

breaks be, when not explicit, at least explained, or in any case explainable.

Modern art museums have thus become one of the important elements of the art world and the art market which they help keep in operation. The dealer, like the collector, aspires to seeing works by "his" artists so honored. Purchase by an institution endows a work with an additional power, that of being part of the public heritage, theoretically inalienable. The permanent collection is the instrument for creating the collective memory. Museums of modern art consequently play several roles at the same time: the role of "selectors" through the purchase which they effect; the role of "conservators" through the arrangement of existing collections or by the creation of new ones; the role of "advertisers" through the public exhibition of acquired works (including catalogue notes, posters, reproductions, post cards, etc.); the direct, or more often indirect, role of "promoters" through the renown which serves to benefit artists selected, dealers and collectors; without mentioning the prestige acquired by museums at the moment of prestigious purchases (often the case of American museums!), or of purchases which they are the first to make and which assure them the reputation of discoverer when the artist becomes famous.

However, modern art museums do not all have the same *status*. Some are official, others semi-official, while still others are private. Even if their role is practically the same, namely to illuminate the evolution of contemporary art, they work in differing manners. In some cases their status obliges them to purchase artists of their country exclusively, in others to spread their purchases among native and foreign artists. The image of art expressed by their collections does not depend, then, only on the artists, but on the political and administrative authority which controls the institution.

The decisive factor remains the financial means available, in the West at least. Acquisitions vary in number depending on whether the museum has at its disposition large sums of money or limited amounts, but especially depending on the price of the works. A Picasso or a Braque are out of the reach of the average museum; as for living artists, only the wealthiest of museums have access to a Rauschenberg assembly, a canvas by

Lichtenstein or a Henry Moore sculpture. The public image of contemporary art thus does not depend only on those responsible for it. Economic power creates a hierarchy of museums which provides the richest with the largest, most representative and most expensive collections; on the other hand the poorer museums, apart from an exception (at the cost of financial acrobatics or providential donations), have remaining for them only local or second-rate collections, sometimes even the rejects.

Directors of these institutions—the head director, the chief curator or the simple curator—today must have managerial skills and even entrepreneurial ability. Would it be more fitting to speak of cultural *entrepreneurs?* I do not know if the label modifies the matter greatly.

Along with acquisition of works of art, most modern art museums devote a sizable portion of their activity to arranging temporary exhibitions, either individually, in association with another museum or collectively with the participants sharing the costs of the undertaking. Contrary to the opinion of the public, which is never well informed on this point any more than it is on the cost of acquisitions, a temporary exhibition is an expensive operation whose insurance and shipping fees weigh heavily on a budget. The more expensive the works are, the more the costs rise, to the point where the "insurance" budget entry often becomes crippling. Therefore it is not surprising that only large museums (large being a synonym for rich) are capable of presenting shows which no museum of lesser size (read: which does not have the same means) would be in a position to consider.

This situation rather curiously leads to making an almost feudal world of museums. Dukes and barons rule over large fiefdoms; the lesser nobility argue over minor positions. I clearly see that my metaphor is a caricature. Nevertheless, it helps to understand the mores which hold sway in a world where ambition is not the least factor. Museum directors have a power which is as large as the size of the financial means of the institution which they run. The major exhibitions are designed among peers, the shows which cross the oceans to appear in Paris, in New York, in Tokyo, and which are the talk of all. Choices are all the more "limiting" in that the director occupies

a high position in the "aristocracy."

Another phenomenon which should be noted is that once the exhibition has been set up, the museum becomes a "broadcaster" who for weeks or months will broadcast a "message" addressed to a public which has no choice but to receive it. The artists and their works benefit from a "show" (this time in the television sense of the word) which reinforces their presence and thus their existence (the "non-exhibited" remain anonymous, frequently a synonym for non-existent).

I am designedly employing terms taken over from media vocabulary. Without our being aware of it, museums are increasingly seen as broadcasters. But if they have acquired the power of a medium, for some of a mass medium (visitors number in the hundreds of thousands), they have also appropriated media logic which is based on the principle of an uninterrupted succession of programs. In a certain sense an analogous phenomenon is occurring today in museums. Shows follow one another without interruption; sometimes there are even several simultaneously in what have come to be called the "major museums" (the "broadcasting" power of the Centre Beaubourg cannot be questioned even if it is the source of much envy).

On radio and television, programs are evaluated by the ratings, imperative in the United States, indicative in Europe, at least according to network presidents. Without stretching the analogy it is obvious that museum shows also have their measuring device in what might be termed "visitor rates." Without saying that exhibition organizers make their decisions based only on the number of visitors (although almost without exception they love to emphasize this number) it is clear that these visitors are an important appreciation factor, not to mention the effect they have on the financial results.

In any case, both for radio and for television, ratings are decisive for advertisers whose quite costly investments in air time must find an echo in satisfactory viewer/listener ratings. Museums have not yet reached the point of selling advertising spots in their shows. Indeed! An economic power has much more subtle means available. In the United States, whether at the Metropolitan, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney

Museum or the Guggenheim to speak only of New York, there is no exhibition of any importance which is not introduced by the veritable magic formula: "This exhibition has been made possible by a grant from X," where X, as might be guessed, is not an anonymous patron, but a multinational crazy about culture (this is my interpretation) such as Shell, Esso, Exxon, Mobil Oil, Standard Oil, IBM, etc. I do not wish to criticize this practice which has given us remarkable exhibits, both in America as well as in Europe. But it would be as erroneous as it is naive to ignore how this practice obviously affects the respective interests of the parties concerned. First the *sponsor* provides all or part of the money needed by the museum; and then the exhibit organized by the museum becomes, if not the advertising medium at least an agent of prestige for the benefit of this sponsor whose trademark functions as flag in our times (flying the colors in the name of art has now become a matter of public relations).

The time has long since past when a Baudelaire could write down his impressions and reflections in calm, often several months after a *Salon* exhibition. Nowadays we expect the *critic* to make his judgment known in the heat of the event, becoming what is termed "news," the media's daily bread (I will develop this point later). The weekly magazine, and even more so the daily newspaper, set entirely new conditions for the critic's work. Space and time are carefully counted out. Whether the critic wishes to or not, his ideas must accommodate themselves to these constraints. Leaving nuances behind, his judgment tends to the incisive.

It is a matter of "covering" in the publication's distribution area as many "events" as possible, or at least those which are deemed to be the most important or the most significant.[6] I am not saying that "sensationalism" has become the substance of journalistic art criticism, but I am simply affirming that it is an ingredient which few authors can resist when it is offered. As proof we need only consider the greedy expectations of critics

[6] These two terms do not refer only to artistic activities; they form blends in which are combined elements of the gossip column and surprise. One need only recall the articles unleashed by the paintings produced by Yves Klein when he began, among other things, to imprint on canvases the forms of nude women who had been first covered with blue paint.

before exhibitions by Salvador Dali, one of the first to have understood the advantage, not to say profit, that an artist can find by being in the news.

But there are other, equally unnoticed, pressures at work on the news. Have we asked *who* is making the news? Above all, it is the organizers of exhibitions: dealers, museum directors, planners of biennales or other such events. Critics are thus increasingly required to ply their craft *a posteriori*, by which I mean working from events of which they are not the creators and about which they are required to write by the printed media —newspapers, magazines and reviews alike. Is it possible to speak of an artist, other than in a book or occasionally in a review, if he is not brought to the public's attention by an event of some importance? Media logic prohibits it.

There results the paradoxical consequence, in present circumstances, that what I would call the *a priori* critic has the initiative, by which I mean the exhibition organizers who do not express themselves by the written word, but whose power controls information which is often linked to a circumstantial incident.[7]

These constraints are not only temporal in nature, but also topographic. The critic's field of activity is divided into zones around the principal production centers. This relation to the news proves that the power of the media has become an integral part of critical activity.

On the other hand, critics are frequently called upon, either (rarely) upon their own initiative or at the invitation of a gallery, to write a preface to an exhibition catalogue. By doing this they contribute to the artist's renown and, even if only modestly, to his standing, and *vice versa*. This reciprocity might appear surprising, but it is explained by the fact that the art market introduces a special factor. If a beginning artist, as well as the gallery showing him for the first time, is always happy to find

[7] The custom or the ritual of celebrating a centenary, bi-centenary or simply the fiftieth anniversary of the birth or the death of an artist or, to take another example, the transfer of *Guernica* from New York to Madrid, are illustrations of the phenomenon. From one day to the next the heat of the news forces critics to speak of it for no other reason than that of the calendar or of the event.

a critic who appreciates his works and who is inclined to write about them, as an artist continues his career and as his reputation is established, a dealer tends to seek out the better known critics whose reputations have an international influence, even if they have only lately shown interest in this particular artist. An artist's "value" and a critic's "value" maintain a relationship in which economic interests are not at all unknown. I would not wish to compare the world of the critics to the "feudalism" of museum directors. The analogy is, however, tempting, except that museum directors benefit from the institutional weight of their respective prerogatives which the critics do not enjoy. On the other hand, the latter have a "relational power" expressed in the network of personal relations which they actively maintain with the aristocracy of the art world.

In the accelerated world of contemporary art, certain critics play the role of leader (there are many examples both in Europe and in the United States). This is what I call "militant criticism." The name of Pierre Restany will forever be associated with the *New Realism* movement, just as that of Celant is with *Poor Art*. Without wishing to overuse the military terminology, it is necessary to note the "offensive" power of these formations. On the one hand is the unit leader, the critic and promoter, and, on the other, artists fighting under his banner. With the aid of modern means of transportation, particularly air travel, moving around quickly takes on an expansionist quality. And so a given artistic movement can, in the space of just a few months, occupy the major centers of the globe. Although these "*condottieri*" do not have the same fortune and their arms are rusty, there is no doubt that their desire to conquer impresses their mark firmly on the art world. As proof we need only look at the victory bulletins which they send out periodically during major international events—biennales, festivals, Documenta, etc. Moreover, militant critics, whether they want to or not, achieve a kind of stardom which includes the artists for whom they are responsible. It is a precarious stardom. The most daring movements are quickly condemned to rear-guard struggles. It is then that the *condottiere* assumes the mantle of "historic figure," I mean in the literal sense, that he takes his place in the sober pages of the art historians. But is it not also a power, no doubt, a legitimate

one, to occupy a place, be it modest or deluxe, in the realm of established knowledge?

Another form of criticism which has developed successfully over the last decades is that of the "theoreticians." At times claiming to be a part of linguistics, or else semiotics, or structuralism, or psychoanalysis, they elaborate their ideas particularly in books or reviews. Rejecting journalistic criticism, which they consider frivolous and ephemeral, distancing themselves from "poetic" criticism, wary above all of intuition, they aim to function as thinkers and make a career of being essayists. It is curious to note that here they are in the company of an ever increasing number of scientists—physicists, mathematicians, anthropologists, biologists—who feel the uncontrollable urge to leave their respective activities behind in order to pour themselves into the world of art, which has reason no doubt to rejoice, but not without some apprehension! The views which these authors develop are frequently motivated more by a theoretical interest than by experience. As a result it is not surprising to note that the ingenuity and fertility which they manifest are frequently applied to limited artistic areas or even to artists which their judgment alone holds to be such.

These micro-sectors, which frequently engage in bitter struggles among themselves, hardly extend beyond the arena of the intelligentsia. Intellectual power, sovereign in this restricted area, proves to be ineffectual in the open area of the market place, all the more so in that intellectual "terrorism," which always threatens the former, is incompatible with the law of supply and demand which controls the latter.

There is no doubt that the *media* have affected the situation of art and artists most profoundly. *Photography*, first of all, has given birth to a proliferation of reproductions in color and in black and white; then *slides*[8] which have become the means of

[8] Realizing the importance of the new media, UNESCO, together with the International Council of Museums (ICOM), announced its intention to produce a "slide collection of contemporary art (1960-1980) which would include paintings, sculptures, objects, etc. from different countries of the world, given the fact that art from this period is not sufficiently well known and that it is little reproduced." Materially the collection included four albums of approximately thirty slides each. Following an initial meeting of the experts, a list of artists was drawn up, and I was invited to make known my "commentaries

documentation *par excellence*; cinema; audiovisual; video cassette recorders and soon video discs: the technical revolutions continue on and on. I will limit myself to examining briefly the two mass media of radio and TV.

Since it has no pictures, the *radio* uses the voice to point out or evoke information relative to the plastic arts. This is how it informs the public, however succintly, of major exhibitions. On the other hand, it has developed a genre which flourishes today, that of interviews—interviews with artists, with critics, collectors, museum directors, but rarely with dealers (which shows quite well that the traditional idea of culture is still resistant to economic reality as far as the arts are concerned). But these genres have rules, and it is not a little surprising to discover that they can be totally without relation to the object dealt with. If the program goes beyond the framework of a brief interview, it is customary—radio obliges—to punctuate it with musical interludes, or even with "pauses" for or "pages" of advertising. These strange blends, which no longer surprise anyone, nevertheless clearly indicate the vibrant power of the medium. Moreover, the interview tends to favor what is said by the artist or the speaker being interviewed, and it is difficult for the listener to verify this since he has no picture. Confidence in the air waves is the rule. But since the radio directors themselves do not consider this confidence either perfectly achieved or totally valid, they direct their preferences toward two types of programs, each of which they are intuitively (technically?) sure

and suggestions" with regard to it. With great astonishment I noted that of the roughly 160 artists on the list, fifty were American, sixteen French, fourteen Italian, eight German, and the rest scattered among other nationalities of the globe. I sent a letter to UNESCO to point out this terrible prejudice and the unbalance which resulted from it. I never received an answer. If I mention this incomplete correspondence, it is not simply to announce a personal incident, but to underline a fundamental aspect of power in relation to art. The four albums of 120 slides will be advertised under the title (not yet definitive) of *Contemporary Art (1960-1980)*. It is evident that for its users—universities, schools, museums, cultural institutions of all kinds—the definitive collection will, because of the authority of UNESCO, become a model documentation, though not an objective one. It is possible to guess the kind of pressures and tribulations that ideologies and interest groups are tempted to bring to bear upon it.

The latest information (verbal) I had was that UNESCO had decided to reformulate its project. Noted.

will be received legitimately: at the death of a great artist, the tribute format (in which radio has the satisfaction of fulfilling its social obligation by supplying its share of the ritual); and when an event has achieved a certain scandalous notoriety, and the radio takes it upon itself to organize a debate to fulfill its democratic or cathartic role, but in which the purpose is more frequently to stimulate listener interest by the using the standard media spice, controversy.

Is *television*, by combining sound and images, in a better position? It is inasmuch as programs devoted to art, though not numerous, are produced regularly and broadcast regularly with a viewing level, even if low, surpassing by a great deal the number of persons who attend an exhibition. The educational aspects of this formidable medium have not been overlooked by American television creators, all the way to the National Association of Broadcasters which was still proclaiming lofty and praiseworthy principles in its 1969 Declaration (fourteenth edition): "Commercial television is an appreciable means for increasing the educative and cultural influence of schools, institutes of higher learning, the home, the church, museums, foundations and other institutions devoted to education and culture..."[9]

Enough is known of the evolution of American television to realize what became of these pious declarations. The virtual monopoly exercised by the three large commercial networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, dictates the choice and the content of programs along with the advertisers. Our European system, based on government monopoly (with the exception of Italy), contains variations from country to country with the common feature of assigning television a public service role, a role whose definition the government authorities tend to reserve to themselves (need we recall the controversy which is still going on in France with regard to new audio-visual legislation?).

Access to a Broadcaster, in a society like ours, is the necessary condition for all that lives from renown (which is the case for brand name products as well as politicians, variety show artists and real artists). It is not hard to understand that such a power,

[9] Robert Burbage, Jean Cazemajou, André Kaspi, *Presse, radio et télévision aux Etats-Unis*, Armand Colin, coll. U2 nº 181, Paris 1972, p. 356.

which could be termed the *mass medium* power,[10] is capable of generating a multitude of passions, envy and intrigue. Whoever can break out of the crowd wins. The Last Judgment will divide mankind into the chosen and the damned; television has only a few chosen ones, and only temporarily so at that.

How are they treated? An article appearing in the press is signed by its author, *a fortiori* a book. Television, on the other hand, a multiple undertaking, brings together, under the producer's authority, a multitude of specialists (whose names appear in the credits to the indifference of all). The decisions which guide the creation of a program are themselves multiple, and it is the cost factor above all else which weighs upon them. (The least drama can cost millions of francs, and a so-called cultural program can run into hundreds of thousands of francs). The price is not paid, consequently, unless the program can attract the number of viewers deemed sufficient to make it "profitable." The temptation is large, if not "natural," to determine production in accordance with this indicator which is no less present for not being openly stated. This bias, for such it is, affects both choice as well as treatment. A program on Christo's wrapped works has every chance of winning out over one dedicated to Rembrandt's prints (with no judgment intended on the respective value of either one).

Television's own kind of logic is obvious not only at its source but also on the receiving end. Without mentioning effects which are inherent already in photographic reproduction—reducing, framing, viewing angle, detail, etc.—it should be noted how much the camera when faced with a generally static plastic work attempts to multiply the zooms and tracking shots in order to bring about at all costs that movement which is essential to the medium. But the important thing is something else still. Even without being aware of it, the viewer's perception is no longer free. From beginning to end it is controlled by the camera and the editing of the sequences. Proxy perception becomes assisted perception, to which can be added programming decisions which oblige us to a determined day and hour.

Even this rapid review of the media brings to light the impe-

[10] Warhol joked that it allows anyone to be "world famous" for five minutes.

ratives—political, technical and economic—governing the choice and type of programs. Obviously there is no technique, including oratory and books, which is purely and simply transparent. Every statement is a construction; communication deals with symbols, and therefore with artifice. But media employing images (particularly television which assembles and combines sound, picture and movement) give above all a feeling for and a sensation of reality. Their credibility is doubly heightened. First because the senses which help us to perceive in real life are directly involved, in any case the most important of these: sight, hearing, the sense of movement. And then because the messages are no longer aimed simply at selective targets, but at the masses which they reach. In addition, and this is not the least of its powers, television operates almost all the time, unlike a book which can be opened, closed, taken up again, or laid down for reflection. The objection will be raised that it is just as easy to turn off the television set as it is to turn it on; but surveys show that, with the influence of the force of habit, this freedom is no more than a myth. It is necessary to recognize that the mass media have a double ontologising power. On the one hand they tend to treat the messages which they broadcast as if they were reality; on the other hand, they make us adopt behavior patterns which become our second nature. The Antenna rules on earth as it does in heaven. Every television news broadcast is based on the scenario of the Book of Genesis: "Let there be news, and there was news." I do not intend to malign the mass media; I only mean to see them as they are.

The art market, like any other market, decided several decades ago to intensify its connections by periodically organizing a meeting of its principal parties under the title of an *Art Fair*. One of the best known, and most prosperous as well, is that held in Basel; its example has been imitated in many countries. The principle is quite simple and roughly the same everywhere. For a generally brief period, one week, a fortnight, the art galleries are invited to set up their stands in the halls which the organizers rent them by the square meter. In the mind of the owning or managing company there is nothing (despite rhetorical declarations to the contrary) to distinguish an art fair from any other type of fair—machine-tools, household appliances, ready-

to-wear and so on. For such a company it is simply a matter (and it has a right to do so) of "selling" its space under the best possible conditions by providing the best administrative and technical infrastructure, including press and public relations services. There is nothing offensive, then, in saying that the works of art are presented there as pieces of merchandise. However, it is precisely this which disturbs the uninitiated visitor. The stands go on as far as one can see. Although some galleries make an attempt to arrange their space pleasantly, most simply pile their works onto a surface that is as cramped as the rental fee is high. It is nothing like an art exhibit such as one ordinarily sees in museums!

The enterprise at least has the merit of being perfectly clear, even at the cost of accumulated disorder. It is a pure and simple commercial operation. This is what allows the organizers to issue a report at the conclusion of the fair which speaks only of sales volumes and turnover registered without any critical or aesthetic commentary.

These fairs, which have multiplied in the capitalist countries (the latest to date just opened in Madrid), play the role of stock exchange where an artist's "quotation" floats and is fixed in reference to the transactions made by the dealers. They are also the place where new "values" are "tried" (the quotation marks disappear when demand outreaches supply!). The general public, accustomed to admiring rather than buying or selling, scarcely penetrates here. Instead there are the dealers exercising their trade, collectors, critics, museum directors and conservators who are all the more courted to the degree that the institution they represent is important and hence capable of buying. Thus in a little less than two decades, art fairs have become an instrument of control which improves the organization of the art market and thereby gives it an increased importance.

The same could be said for the other similar agent, *auction sales*. Of course these have existed for a long time; but houses such as Sotheby's and Christie's, whose names are by now famous, have given them prestige crowned by financial successes reported in all the papers. Velasquez, Cézanne, Monet and Rembrandt "make" millions of dollars. Dead for several years now, Picasso reaches record figures which a still living Dali aims

to outdo. Just recently the latter's "Enigma of Desire" climbed to the million dollar level. In these contests of desire, in which the sole question is one of records broken or to be broken, the public can only find it enigmatic that there are people with wealth enough to purchase paintings or sculptures for sums which are so large as to be the equivalent in the public mind to the cost of a hospital or a school. This observation is not just a simple parenthesis. It brings out the social dimension of art which exists alongside its economic dimension. Only the moneyed classes can fight over the works of the masters; the other classes are excluded from the struggle, including public institutions which most frequently seem to be no more than poor cousins (except in exceptional cases where pre-emptive rights are exercised).

Another consequence, this one more insidious, is that the number of masterpieces which we think and which we are led to think belong to the public heritage are, in fact, in private hands and are exchanged among private owners. Of course they sometimes are included in a public showing provided that the collector gives his consent and that insurance fees—quite high —are paid by the museum. When the exhibition is completed, the borrowed works return to their proprietor who, thanks to the exhibit and the attendant publicity, generally finds that his works have increased in value as well as in renown. It is true that many collectors make large donations, or, at the time of their deaths, prestigious bequests which then bear their name. American museums particularly benefit from this, their European counterparts to a lesser degree. This does not change the fact that the notion of public heritage, so frequently brought up in matters of art, is subject to the ordeal of the economic and social powers wielded by the privileged classes.

To complete this review, I will deal briefly with the case of the *Biennales*, by which I mean that type of national or international exhibition organized periodically in one or several countries.[11] According to their charter which varies from case to case, they are sometimes devoted to all the plastic arts and

[11] For the sake of discussion, I am applying the term *biennale* to all such events whether they be true biennales, or triennales, quadriennales, Documenta, Salons, etc. Their common trait is their regular appearance in a given place.

sometimes only to one particular expression: painting, engraving, sculpture, tapestries, etc. The organization is usually entrusted to a committee or to a director who issues invitations, either directly (in the case of a general commissioner), or with the aid of national commissioners designated by their respective governments, or with the assistance of a jury delegated with selection. Despite the diversity of regulations, the common objective of these assemblies is to provide the public over a determined period of time (much longer than that of the fairs) with information of an international nature and scale. Whatever may be the avowed and published purposes of the undertaking, it is clear that certain powers are at work here too. And first of all the power to bring such a show off.

That is a matter of finances, and a matter of prestige as well. The city which takes the initiative for organizing such an event, as is usually the case, hopes that it will bring it both fame and visitors, this thanks to the success of the show. In the financial affairs of cities, tourist trade revenues have become an important factor. However, unless a city is lucky enough to be a Venice, which really means facing the threat of two-fold flooding from the sea and from tourists, or unless a city is fortunate enough to be a capital or historic city whose treasures are classified by the guide books according to the number of stars—one, two, three —assigned to each notice, then the attractions are limited. The charms of nature (mountains, sea, sun) no doubt serve well in creating excellent advertising brochures, but an appeal to a certain type of tourism called cultural is more and more in vogue. A city such as Kassel, which can hardly be called seductive in its own right, has acquired a world-wide reputation thanks to *Documenta* which brings to its every exhibition all those who count in the world of art. There is scarcely a village or town remaining which does not seek to gain a title of nobility by creating a festival. Every form of expression can be highlighted, as long as the category is still open: painting, music, sculpture and carving, dance, ballet, opera, song, variety numbers, comic strips, cartoons, film,[12] video and on and on. And if the category

[12] The city of Cognac, with a population of about 10,000, has just created a festival devoted to detective films in which, apart from the appeal of the event in itself, the city hopes to encourage authors of these thrillers to modify

has already been selected somewhere else, the same festivals can circulate from one country to another.[13]

As to the event itself—biennale, festival, Salon—it is evident that alongside the tourist interests there are the powers of the inviting authority or the one responsible for making the selections. In the case of a general commissioner, despite the stated (if they are) professions of objectivity, there are both personal relations and affinities at play. When the formula chosen calls for national commissioners, the choices are made by the State in the East bloc countries; in Western countries these are, if not suggested, at least guided by the choice of commissioners. As soon as an international event is born, political authorities begin to show their face.

Although the institution of the jury has given rise to sporadic criticism, it has never been challenged other than here and there after the events of May '68. This fact is all the more astonishing in that today there is no political, social, moral or religious authority which has escaped challenge.[14] It is as if the

the behavior of their characters in one respect at least. Studies made by serious sociologists have pointed out that whisky is the favorite beverage of cops and robbers alike. Could the Cognac festival have as a side effect the replacement, at least partially, of the omnipresent whisky by the local product? Such motivation was expressed quite clearly by one of the festival directors on radio France-Inter in March, 1982.

[13] The objection can be made that such events almost always operate in the red, which is true. But a more refined analysis of the situation brings out the fact that articles in the press as well as radio and TV programs are of great value to the sponsoring city, worth as much or even more than advertisements which it would have to purchase in order to "sell" itself to tourists. One need only consider the bitterness of the struggles in which cities engage to obtain the privilege of organizing the Olympic games, which are, to be sure, another type of event.

[14] A no less surprising fact is that, to my knowledge, there has been no developed study devoted to this (when will there be a thesis written on it?). It should be noted that members of the jury are themselves designated by the organizing group or, in the case of public commands, which must be studied in more detail, by political authorities. The persons consulted are qualified as "experts." Since the title itself does not exist as such (except in certain countries for courts and customs operations), it is to their fame or to the importance of their functions that they owe their being invited. Let us add that although the jury is a relatively stable institution, those who take part in it are not. For reasons which depend either on the organization or on public authorities, members of the jury change. Their power thus depends in part on the power of those who name them. It is true that a juror who leaves often finds another jury in which to take his place. The world of art can thus lay claim to a club of super-jurors!

art world needed appointed experts to designate those who are to be marked with honors. But the fact of being marked is of great consequence both for artists and for the public. When a jury decides to single out some sixty artists from among the hundreds or even the thousand who are presented to it, it is obvious that it is granting a prize to a chosen few who will be the only ones that the public will be called upon to come to know.[15]

As for the prizes which are customarily distributed in the many biennales and whose winners are designated by the jury, it is no less evident that these winners benefit from a bonus which combines excellence with fame. Curiously, most artists affect disdain for these prizes considered an anachronistic token, but those who obtain them take great care to make mention of them in every edition of their catalogue. No less curiously, the jury which must distribute the prizes always proclaims that it will consider quality alone, which should be an affirmation of principle except that our era has challenged practically all criteria. Likewise the distribution of the prizes today owes a great deal to the composition of the jury; since there is no common conception, the cultural power of jurors is a significant factor. How is this manifested?

The practice of international juries, a phenomenon dating back several decades, indicates that, beyond personal pressures, which are rare, there are two motives involved in decision-making. First a jury tends to trust in "confirmed" artists or those on their way to confirmation, those already on top of the art world; secondly a jury tends to give distinction to things which have not been seen before and which pass, rightly or wrongly, for original (and here, as can well be imagined, the discussions are the most heated). In art, then, the *new* has a preferential value in a society of such accelerated change as our own, just as it does for any other product relatively speaking. Overstatement is not excluded. Certain particularly ingenious artists have learned to hold back their efforts until the opening day of an exhibition when the press, radio and television will be waiting breathlessly

[15] Such is the case of the International Tapestry Biennale at Lausanne which operates on the principle of open competition.

to cover the page one "event" (the machine built by Tinguely and which he himself set on fire in front of the Milan cathedral ... the examples are without number!).

The international exhibitions-confrontations have thus become a medium obliged like other media to submit to a periodicity which forces them to become something new from one edition to another. The original and primary objective, the desire for information, shifts in light of the need for constantly changing the content and the format. To retain an increasingly solicited interest, it is less important to develop in depth than to be striking, to produce an *impact*. This term, borrowed from ballistics, clearly explains the turn around. By pushing things to their limit it can be said that the international exhibitions, like firing ranges, are places where the best "projectiles" (artists, prize winners, performances) can be tested, those who choose the mass media to reach their public-target. A limited but significant example are the heroes of body art who say that only the language of the body is important and who are constantly flying from one end of the globe to another to perform their ritual in front of the cameras.

Up until now, for the purposes of analysis, I have limited myself to examining successively the agents of the art world, occasionally referring to the relations which exist between them. But it is the importance of their interactions, multiplied by our modern means, which should be considered, and I can only give a weak reflection of this. The term "artistic production," increasingly used in place of "artistic creation," should put us on the alert, however. There is no production which does not require means and structures of production, and hence powers, and these have acquired such a place in the matter that they divide our planet into zones which are as precise as they are unequal, without our even being aware of it. If "artistic creation" theoretically can exist in every country, with no racial or class distinction, it is not the same for "artistic production" which is established and operates only in determined places.

I use the name *hot places* to designate the two most powerful zones: New York and Paris. The *cool places,* as I call them, are, not in hierarchical order, London, Milan, Cologne, Amsterdam and a few other large cities. The rest of the globe, particularly

the Third World, is nothing but an immense *cold area*, a zone in which nothing happens.[16]

The hot places are those in which the interactions of the agents of the art world reach their highest degree of density and concentration; here they are generally at their maximum and most sharply focused. Such places work a *centripetal* power over artists who are all attracted to them, whether they move into them either permanently or temporarily, whether they only stop in for a visit or for a show or whether they simply dream about them. Their *centrifugal* power is no less strong, for it is also in these places that the major media have their headquarters in which are prepared the programs which bring fame. The cool places enjoy these same characteristics to a lesser degree. I need not add that the very term cold areas implies that these are marked practically by non-existence.[17]

In an era dominated by the media, the hot places, and to a certain extent the cool places, have become the centers of the power of broadcasting *par excellence*, for they possess, produce and operate the "source of information."[18] North America's voice reduces that of South America to a whisper. And in Europe, even though there are many voices, it is that of Paris which continues to carry loud and strong.

Another consequence is the division of artists into classes: international, national, regional or local artists. However, it is evident that no artist is born "international;" he is necessarily "local" at first. But although it is true that an international artist

[16] Is it necessary to point out that an "area where nothing happens" in no way means that it is empty or inactive, but only that not being "activated" by our Western conditions, it does not fit our model?

And two further remarks: 1. I am describing the situation in countries with a market economy; countries with a socialist or communist economy are separate. 2. The English expressions (used in the French text) seem symptomatic to me of the influence wielded by America; I could just as easily have spoken of "*places chaudes,*" "*places tièdes*" or "*aires froides*;" the reader will have to decide which terminology he prefers.

[17] My distinction requires two further remarks: 1. The cool places are subject to large variations; the list of cities which I have given above is in no way exclusive; 2. My distinction must be applied relatively; in many countries, wealthy in general, there exist hot places which are the capital cities as opposed to the "provinces." Between the two are active centers (cool places), which are certain large cities.

[18] The metaphor is misleading. A "source" connotes a natural phenomenon, whereas information is a ready-made artifact, a product.

can in fact only be local, there is no example of a local artist rising to international status without his "legitimacy" having been confirmed either in New York or in Paris, if possible in both.

One could rebel against this situation reducing artists to the state of football players. The competitive framework has been extended to all activities, including art. Efforts made periodically by some countries to promote their artists changes nothing other than confirming them at a national level. The hot places, then, are those areas in the world of artistic production which have shown themselves capable of producing "international" material.

Conclusion(s?)

As we saw at the outset, art, especially art of the past, is generally considered an activity distinct from others and one which, in addition to the aesthetic feeling that it awakens, gives access to a sense experience through which we learn to discover the anatomy of civilizations. This is an "idealist" perspective, confirmed as much by art history as by the role assigned to museums. At the end of our journey we discover with some surprise, perhaps tinged with bitterness, that artistic activity today is based in large part on production involving primarily economic, political, technical and social considerations. The temptation would be strong to conclude, as most sociologists do, that art now is simply a business matter. Even though everything pushes us to this conclusion, it is hard not to express (and I must express) a certain unease. It is this unease that I mean to explain now, not only out of a concern for precision, but also in order to include myself in the analysis which I have just made.

Our industrial (or post-industrial) society is marked by its extraordinary production capacity which multinational and even national companies have extended around the world. Stated schematically, the objective of every company is to produce the largest number of products possible at the lowest possible cost in order to control the largest market possible. Competition is merciless; every possible kind of power is activated employing an ever more powerful Technology.

It is a truism to repeat that our environment is increasingly made up of industrial products, that it is itself an *artifact*, and that the megalopolis offers us shocking, even frightening, images of this fact. There is nothing, from Tokyo to New York, from Sao Paolo to Mexico City, from food to cosmetics, from automobiles to household furnishings, nothing which is not a result of industrial production, refuse included.

Whether it be consumer products which theoretically are cheap, or rare and consequently expensive products, the essential nature of a product, be it goods or services, is two-fold. On the one hand it meets a need, which can in any case be a created one; we need only consider the video cassette recorder market or tourism. On the other it is accessible to everyone who can pay the price, which limits "everyone" to people who are solvent only.

Artistic activity is different. First it is not the domain of industrialists, despite attempts at creating a market for "multiples" (and I have already alluded to this). It retains a craftsman-like quality: paintings and sculptures come from the hands or the workshop of a man or a woman. However, unlike a craftsman's product, whether goods or service, which also meet a need and whose price is set by the market like that of products, the work of art has the double peculiarity of not meeting *any need* originally (in the sense defined above), and of originally having *no price* as such determined by the law of supply and demand, other than by becoming a simple piece of merchandise. Ultimately no one *needs* a Rembrandt, a Leonardo da Vinci or a Picasso (I verified this in many parts of the world where these names caused no reaction, although Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Toyota, Mitsubishi, Philip Morris... not to mention the transistor, the automobile, the refrigerator...). Again ultimately one could imagine an artist who decides not to sell anything but to keep everything for himself (which is not an idle conjecture since this is the case of many partisans of *art brut* or the Postman Cheval, for example); or another who decides by himself that his works are worth as much as those of Picasso and who sets his prices in consequence, even at the cost of finding no takers (and I know of at least one like this).

The singularity of art, at least of the plastic arts, is that it

originally has an *imaginary* value which is based on nothing more than imaginary need[19] and that the question of price is not even asked. But the imaginary, far from being a synonym of arbitrary or unreal, forms a fundamental dimension of the human being and of society as a whole.

On the other hand, the work of art is simultaneously a material object which the dealer attempts to transform into a product in order to deal with it. His task consists in doing all that he can to transform the value judgment into an actual value measured by the artist's standing.

However, the imaginary element borne by a work of art only exists inasmuch as it is recognized and understood as such,[20] without scientific, utilitarian or even social verification. This is because art pertains to the realm of value judgments, by definition subjective and/or intersubjective. But since a value judgment always deviates to one side or another, the dealer, whether directly or indirectly, attempts to use all the powers which we have just seen—from word of mouth to posters, from catalogues to TV—in order to encourage the partners of the art world—collectors, critics, museum directors, exhibition organizers, etc.—to act as marketing agents. It is a laborious undertaking which involves considerable expense, and the dealer knows that success is never guaranteed.

The art world is different and continues to differentiate itself from the simple art market. Even if the latter continues to gain

[19] The nature of the *act of appropriation* seems to me fundamental for explaining this point. The need to have an automobile (an industrial product) or a table made by a carpenter (hand-crafted product) can be satisfied by the act of purchasing which makes of me the proprietor of the object. On the other hand, when I stand in front of the *Mona Lisa*, I can truly "appropriate" to myself its imaginary value, make it my own; but in this case there is no transfer of ownership. Symbolic appropriation is no less important than material appropriation, but in today's world everything is organized in such a way that the latter dominates, to such an extent that there is practically a "symbolic" industry: selling an automobile means selling the prestige of a particular model and make as well. But not all imaginary needs have been industrialized (yet). Appropriation has not (yet) been reduced merely to the purchase of a product. We should also reflect on the industry which makes possible the appropriation of imaginary values by the use of photographs, substituting an image for the original thereby making the image a product.

[20] This requires an apprenticeship practiced by every society to establish the imaginary which they need to live and which has the name *culture,* based on value.

ground, it has not reduced the former, at least not up until now. The powers may continue to multiply, consult with one another and concentrate themselves, but they will not be able to achieve that kind of planning which alone permits predicting, the ambition of all power. The slightest uncertainty is a danger. Although the critics, collectors, museum curators and the media may often speak together with the market, still they must have the feeling, the impression, sometimes the illusion of acting freely. Their cohesion, even if it is an alibi or indulgence, cannot be simply reduced to an acceptance of fact. Often working toward the same end, they profess different reasons for doing so. The value judgment upon which they pride themselves allows them a wide enough margin for escaping from the determinism of the best organized market. The art world is a nebula, the art market a system. The relation between one and the other is inclusion and not coincidence. The predictions possible in the one disappear in the other. Despite the application to art of scientific, economic and political methods—statistics, investment policies, cultural politics—the world of art remains a world of contingencies. Indeed, unexpected expressions can be born there, passions be unleashed, humors may flow which upset, or at least perturb, the establishment of a system. Attempts at control may be strengthened, but instability persists, even to becoming conflictual. Note the "crisis" of art which is so deplored, but which in fact is its ferment.

It is necessary at this point to dissipate the unclarity surrounding the terms *agent* and *partner* which I have used indistinctly in the preceding pages. The agent is the person within a system who exercises functions whose objective is that of the system itself. This is true for all agents, whatever name they might have, from every company, no matter what type of production they are concerned with. On the other hand, a partner implies an associative type relation which, even within the framework of a company, is characterized by a participation which can be appreciated by the partner himself. The agent exists through the functions he performs; the partner exists inasmuch as he is considered a *subject.*

To return to art, we arrive at the following: if the market tends to turn partners of the art world into agents of the system,

these agents cannot rest until they find or retain something of their origins as partners. To speak concretely, there is no dealer worthy of the name, no critic, no museum director, no expert, perhaps even no auctioneer, whatever might be his affiliation to the art market, who does not become enthusiastic at finding an unknown or poorly known artist, who does not work actively to defend him against indifference, sometimes even against his own best interests. It is the honor of the art world to be ambiguous when ambiguity means that the alienable part to which the agent subjects himself does not arrive irremediably to smother the inalienable part which constitutes him as a person associated with other persons in respect for their respective subjectivities.

Today scientific, technical and economic powers increasingly have the effect of "objectifying" us; objects or agents, it is always the function which is the most important. Is political power any less forceful? Theoretically, in the so-called democratic countries at least, it results from the free choice of its citizens. In fact it is more and more delimited by the other powers and assumes the form of a State which reduces the individual to a state of impotence. Not only in his material existence, but, more seriously, by subjecting his imagination to ideologies. But an ideology can never be more than a strait jacket at worst or at best a crutch.

Art, on the other hand, despite the limits and pressures to which it is subject (chiefly economic ones in Western countries, political ones in Eastern countries), exhibits the distinction, in an era of mass-production such as our own, of addressing itself primarily to individuals by appealing to them as such. The aesthetic dimension, unlike other dimensions created by the powers where everything functions in terms of relations of force, opens onto the imaginary where the play of values modulates without setting any limits. Is the aesthetic dimension the only one (the last one) to offer this possibility? At the most basic level, the "I like that... I do not like that..." is the simultaneously derisive as well as moving proof that the most intimate part of ourselves, our sensitivity, has found its expression. The conditioning of power has rendered us mute despite our cries. Art does not give the right to speak, it provides the words.

Aesthetic value, which is at the heart of artistic activity, seems

to me today to be a "front-line" value, in both senses of the term. Like front-line technology it seeks to discern the future; but unlike such technologies whose objective is always associated with power, art breaks down the powers in order to generate enjoyment and meaning. It assures us that beneath our ever more proudly demi-urgic apparel we are and remain (man's humility as well as his greatness) not simply agents of production but also poetic and hence creative beings.

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