Your Art World: Or, The Limits of Connectivity
– Lane Relyea

For starters, consider the lounge. What exhibition today is complete without one? A good example was provided by 'Be Creative! *Der kreative Imperativ*', a show that opened at Zürich's Design Museum in late 2002. Participating artists, designers, architects and theorists contributed projects devoted to the themes of neo-liberal economic policy, flexible business management and immaterial labour. To get a sense of the show's layout, think hip dot-com startup. Or, in the words of its curator, the Swiss artist Marion von Osten, 'a modern space for living and working, ranging from the loft to the open-plan office, alternating production and regeneration, and using game tables, advisory literature and chill out zones'.[1]

Now compare this to the more recent 'Make Your Own Life: Artists In & Out of Cologne' at the Philadelphia ICA, a show with a similar sounding title, also phrased in the imperative – only, rather than 'be creative', its command, following the marketing trend ignited by the popularity of websites such as MySpace and YouTube, was to customise and personalise, to be *self*-creative. ('"Our", "my" and "your" are consumer empowerment words', notes Manning Field, Senior Vice President for brand management at Chase Card Services.[2]) Whereas the Zürich show openly worried over the post-Fordist production protocols it critically mimed, the Philadelphia show stressed the liberating promise the creative personality holds out to society. Rather than flexibility, it talked about autonomy; rather than fret over neo-liberal appropriations of the artist as an idealisation of entrepreneurial subjectivity, it pondered 'the possibilities of artistic agency... artists creating themselves'.[3] It, too, featured a lounge.

Who relaxes in these things? Who instead doesn't feel a strong ambivalence, if not irritation, when happening upon the lounge? Of course, the irritation is the best part. Contradictions bottleneck here. Typically the lounge is meant to signify a progressive artistic or curatorial approach to exhibitions, one that privileges context and process over discrete objects, that turns away from static commodity display in favour of a more dynamic environment of ongoing, interactive meaning production. The lounge demonstrates how 'meaning is fugitive ... beyond the object or image as such ... complexly wound up with social dynamics', to quote curator Bennett Simpson from the *Make Your Own Life* catalogue.

But the lounge as organic social oasis sprouting in the middle of the staid institution answers other agendas as well. With the spread of instrumentalised and instrumentalising communications technology, social exchange is increasingly ensnared within the logic of commodity exchange. The lounge descends from that hybrid architectural offspring of the New Economy, what Starbucks founder and chairman Howard Schultz famously calls 'the third place', a casual multi-use site mixing home and office, business and leisure, private and public, production and consumption, a space equally amenable to group brainstorming, web-surfing and poetry readings. Ample couches, errant reading material, choice tunes and palpable ambiance now come standard in not only the new project-oriented office configurations but also in what is called 'community-centric retailing' – from the small lounge-ish satellites of big-box outlets such as Best Buy to redesigned bank branches that serve espresso drinks and offer yoga classes.[4]

This isn't just a matter of conjuring 'parallels' between superstructure and base. As surplus value grows frothier around such intangible and instantly obsolete commodities as events, services, affective experiences and word-of-mouth buzz,

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Marion von Osten, 'Be Creative! Der kreative Imperativ: Project Summary', www.k3000.ch/becreative/summary.html. Last accessed 2 July 2006

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Quoted in Stuart Elliott, 'Advertising: Nowadays, It's All Yours, Mine or Ours', The New York Times, 2 May 2006

3
Bennett Simpson, 'Make Your Own Life', Make Your Own Life: Artists In & Out of Cologne (exh. cat.), Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 2006, p.11

4 Gary McWilliams and Steven Gray, 'Slimming Down Stores', The Wall Street Journal, 29 April 2005; Jane J. Kim, 'A Latte with Your Loan?', The Wall Street Journal, 17 May 2006

and as business practice increasingly relies on networking, on the accumulating and maintaining of contacts and the ability to access and move nimbly between myriad social circles, art institutions as well scramble to find ways, in the words of Anthony Davies and Simon Ford, 'to formalise informality ... [to] provide what are essentially convergence zones for corporate and creative networks to interact, overlap with one another and form "weak" ties. The prominence that events such as charity auctions, exhibition openings, talk programmes and award dinners have attained demonstrates how central face-to-face social interaction is to the functional capacity of these new alliances.'[5]

No question the lounge is part of a trend – but toward what? More creative social spontaneity, or more chronically intermittent employment with longer 'immaterial' work hours and no benefits? Are we witnessing the fulfillment of that long-sought avant-garde dream of merging art and life, or is this merger more corporate than utopian, more the implementation of neo-liberal strategic goals for a fully freelance economy, one staffed by highly motivated, underpaid, short-term and subcontracted creative types for whom, in Osten's words, 'artists and designers are taken as the model'?[6] Is the public sphere being refashioned in the image of intense and intimate artistic collaboration, or is it being further fragmented by the privatisations and nepotisms of ego-casting and controlled-access cyber-socialising? Given the business class's new mantra of 'network or perish', is the lounge a glorious expansion of freedom or the new key to capitalist survival?

As the Zürich and Philadelphia shows illustrate, discussion of this topic appears to have unfurled somewhat asymmetrically on the two sides of the Atlantic. Many artists and critics, especially in Europe, do in fact pay heed to the emerging characteristics of what the Blair government pithily calls 'The Talent Economy', although little analysis has been devoted to how such macro-trends specifically interact with developments internal to art practice.[7] On the other hand, when focus stays trained on such art innovations as service-oriented projects and relational aesthetics, or the re-emergence of collectives and fictive identities, these developments tend to get talked about as if they were transpiring under the Old Economy. Despite vague references to the 'chaos of global culture in the information age', artists still garner applause for the sheer feat of avoiding categorisation and not making objects.[8] But given the contemporary art world's complex realities, with its vast institutionalisation, its more diverse, 'collaborative' forms of patronage, its mixed public, private and corporate revenue streams, and its decisive influence on the global jockeying of municipal and even regional economies, critical reckoning has more on its hands than just finger-wagging at the cash purchase of stretched canvas. Mobility, fluidity, flux and unpredictability have been catechisms of corporate managers for at least the past decade. And yet these very same words were used repeatedly not only to pitch this year's Whitney Biennial but to vouch for its 'criticality'. Curators Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne likened the show to a big 'cabaret', as if to suggest a kind of mega-lounge, the 'third place' writ spectacularly – but of course their intended point of reference was instead Cabaret Voltaire and the avant-garde interventions of nearly a hundred years ago. The other Biennial theme, about collectives and pseudo-identities, was described by the curators as 'a way of creating a space outside the market: a space where things can't be pinned down so easily and exchanged ... so that the artist isn't directly accessible.'[9] Tell that to John Kelsey, a critic for *Artforum* and, as co-founder of the Bernadette Corporation and director of Reena Spaulings gallery, a Biennial participant twice over. 'In part because of "this mystique around the collective"', *The Wall Street Journal* quotes Kelsey in an article on his gallery's part in the pseudonyms fad, 'at a recent show, works sold quickly.'[10]

Staking a position outside and opposed to 'the system' is definitely no cinch these days – especially when the system feeds off segmentation and diversification (if not diversity). Nor is mounting some purge of all forms of art-world complicity a solution – if only because not much of interest would be left. What would help, though, is a thorough transvaluing of critical art discourse and its objects, starting with a reassessment and reproblematising of the current situation and its determinants from a more up-to-date perspective. This at least would overcome the hypocrisy of basing claims for the superiority of relational and performative

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Anthony Davies and Simon Ford, 'Culture Clubs', Mute, vol.18, September 2000, pp.23–24. See also Carol Kino, 'It's Time For Artists To Give Till It Hurts', The New York Times, 28 May 2006; and Eric Wilson, 'Using a White Shirt As Their Canvas', The New York Times, 11 May 2006

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M.v. Osten, op. cit. See also Andrew Ross, No-Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs, New York: Basic Books, 2003

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Besides the projects and writings of Osten and others involved in the 'temporary coalition' k3000 (www.k3000.ch), see Jan Verwoert, Die Ich-Ressource: zur Kultur der Selbst-Verwertung, Munich: Kunstverein München, 2003; Angela McRobbie, 'Everyone is Creative: Artists as New Economy Pioneers?', openDemocracy, 30 August 2001; and Aleksandra Mir (ed.), Corporate Mentality: An Archive Documenting the Emergence of Recent Practices Within a Cultural Sphere Occupied by Both Business and Art, New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2001

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Nicolas Bourriaud, Postproduction, New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002, p.7

art forms on a static, reified caricature of their conditions. At the same time, analysis needs to go beyond general social processes, beyond even such art-world infrastructure as *Kunsthallen* and galleries and their mixed economic support, and engage art practice itself, its material, structural and genealogical specificities, so as to avoid the kind mechanistic account of cultural forms as pre-destined by causes firmly planted elsewhere. The point is to not reduce art but hopefully to lay some necessary groundwork for elaborating whatever options it may still have available.

Only the briefest attempt at such a genealogy is possible here. To wit: much art practice today can be seen as developing from an apparent reconciliation of two separate but related trends that dominated the 1980s. On the one hand, there was the prevalence of art rooted in the street cultures of hip-hop, punk and new wave, as well as in DIY and activist politics, all of which conformed to the sociologically grounded, Gramscian arguments about signifying practices and *bricolage* put forward by people like Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige and Michel de Certeau. At the same time, much art production and reception was also framed within a more philosophically-minded, totalising Frankfurt School portrayal of culture as monolithic, dictatorial and pacifying, according to which floating signifiers colonised and privatised social relations within an industrially-produced mass spectacle.

By the end of the 1980s, this latter trend seemed to recede behind the Cultural Studies paradigm and its focus on everyday practice, as well as what Hal Foster has called 'the return of the real' – the re-emergence, that is, of the situated and material body. But interest in the body didn't so much reject as make more material the previous notion of media, thickening it and making it more local. Media came to reference as much fanzines, protest flyers and other empowerments of the corner copy shop as it did multi-million-dollar Madison Avenue propaganda campaigns. Appropriation was folded into *bricolage*, or what Claude Levi-Strauss called 'the science of the concrete'; it entailed handling, adapting and piecing together *things*. Heterogeneity, which signaled channel-surfing schizophrenia in David Salle's paintings, stood for a healthy and welcoming capaciousness a decade later in Laura Owens's canvases – as if she undertook painting the way one might collect records, as a (sub?)cultural practice. Or compare Richard Prince's early 1980s media appropriations with Elizabeth Peyton's later renderings of celebrities, or Barbara Kruger's media scripts with the handwritten pedestrian communiqués facilitated by Gillian Wearing. Or, more simply, juxtapose Peter Halley quoting Baudrillard in 1983 with Halley publishing *Index* magazine in 1996. In the work of Mike Kelley and Jim Shaw, shopping segued into thrifting; with Wolfgang Tillmans, thrifting turned fashion into street fashion. What seemed at the beginning of the 1990s an opposition between the apparitions of spectacle and the opacities of embodiment and trauma soon disappeared as artists embraced a middle ground between the two – the realm of everyday life and common cultural exchange. Not superstar celebrities or abject flesh but people wearing clothes, eating food and hanging out with friends.

Such a synopsis hews closely to several accounts already written of the 1990s, especially the one canonised by Nicolas Bourriaud in his books *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) and *Postproduction* (2001). The notion of artistic practice that comes to the fore here has supposedly little to do with the stereotype of the lone genius who transmutes raw matter in the isolation of the studio. Rather, it's about intervening in everyday materials that are themselves continuous and interwoven with larger communities and cultures; and it's also about identity as an ongoing construction, always inclusive of and open to larger systems of exchange. At the same time, 'artists who insert their work into that of others', as Bourriaud explains, 'contribute to the eradication of the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work.'[11] The antithesis pitting creative hero against conformist consumer is thus transcended in Bourriaud's favoured figures of the DJ, programmer and web surfer, all '"semionauts" who produce original pathways through signs'.[12] With the appearance of such *bricoleurs*, consumption is no longer seen as such an evil, or even much of a problem. Indeed, it suddenly becomes redemptive, not just a part of practice but a special, providential skill, a form of artistic know-how that encompasses the whole of daily activity, the cobbling together of the information bits that temporarily constitute one's

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Quoted in Tim Griffin, 'Cabaret License', Artforum, January 2006, pp.94–96

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Jacob Hale Russell, 'The Invisible Artist', The Wall Street Journal, 31 December 2005 – 1 January 2006

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N. Bourriaud, op. cit., p.7

12
Ibid., p.12

'self' and one's 'community'. Signature style gives way to signature code.

As described by Bourriaud, signifying practices grow more general and abstract during the course of the 1990s, less anchored to the specific politics of local semiotic skirmishes. Instead, 'the market become[s] the omnipresent referent for contemporary artistic practices'.[13] In Bourriaud's christening of the market as master paradigm, it's possible to recognise the return from exile of forces that had formerly gone under the names of spectacle and culture industry. Sign production now back peddles away from Levi-Strauss's *bricolage* to approximate more closely than ever Baudrillard's simulation. The 'homologies' artists string together are less about the coherence of subcultural politics than about the aesthetics of integrated end-to-end product design. And while practice remains beholden to an additive rather than subtractive mode, it's less about reckoning with sculptural materiality than about sequencing articulated differences so as to manipulate and exploit signification. 'Artists today program forms more than they compose them,' exclaims Bourriaud, 'they remix available forms and make use of *data* ... [they] surf on a network of signs.'[14]

This is where activity in the arena of art begins to produce certain unquestioned analogies with developments in other spheres, to affirm and be affirmed by, say, official economic and political policy. During the 1980s, Thatcher and Reagan provided art with plenty of handy tropes about the tyranny of the all-powerful image, while Evil Empire foreign policy and culture-wars domestic policy were met with what many worried was an over-politicisation of culture. In the 1990s, however, as much post-Cold War politics encouraged the economisation of culture, an oppositional art becomes harder to discern. Or at least as portrayed by Bourriaud, 1990s practices – in which resourceful DIY artists nurture myriad forms of convivial exchange – can be seen to complement the euphemisms of entrepreneurial initiative and individual responsibility used to sell the agendas of the Clinton and Blair regimes, namely their placating of business and financial markets by rolling back state assistance programs and 'ending welfare as we know it'. The recent 'social turn' in art has had as part of its context neo-liberal policies that are at base anti-social.

In terms of economics, another change in the surrounding context of art production is the revamping of business models in response to the impact of new information technologies on marketplace dynamics. That consumers have grown less passive with the replacement of television's few big networks by desktop interface and the web is certainly not headline news anymore. Marketers have long turned their gunsites on their own version of the *bricoleur*, what they call the 'prosumer': customers who no longer feel hostage to standardised commodities, who instead customise the design specifications of online merchandise, who subscribe to cable rather than watch ad-based broadcast television, who download and sort through MP3s and personalise TV programming using TiVo, who publish writing, photography and more on blogs and personal websites. 'The market today,' writes Douglas B. Holt, Professor of Marketing at Oxford's School of Business, 'thrives on ... unruly *bricoleurs* who engage in nonconformist producerly consumption practices.'[15] Product differentiation is no longer purely a manufacturing and retailing strategy, a staple of planned obsolescence and the staving off of overproduction – rather than forced on consumers, it's now demanded and implemented by them. Increasingly, value is encoded in not objects but practices, which take over much of the value-adding for the market. That this is very much still a matter of highly structured markets, not some romantic form of off-the-books subcultural barter, gets harder to deny everyday. Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, for example, has redrawn its entire corporate strategy around its recent acquisition of MySpace, while such music behemoths as EMI and Universal now debut CDs that include software encouraging customers to remix tracks (the recent Billy Joel $60 box set comes encoded with a programme called UmixIt).[16] It's as if the pronouns Barbara Kruger assigned to authoritarian media images in the 1980s had switched sides. Give credit, then, to Sony BMG Music Entertainment for 'challenging authorship'.

As with every other form of labour under the New Economy, so too has value production in the consumer marketplace become relational, dialogical, networked. The commodity, like the postmodern artwork, has relaxed its former pretenses to autonomy. The *bricoleur*, or what Bourriaud fancies the 'programmer', encounters

13
Ibid., p.22

14
Ibid., pp.11 and 13

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Douglas B. Holt, 'Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding', Journal of Consumer Research, vol.29 no.1, June 2002, p.88. See also D. Holt, How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004. For a history of the decline of authoritarian mass-marketing practices starting in the 1960s, see Thomas Frank, The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism, University of Chicago Press, 1997

16
John Jurgensen, 'Record Labels Say: Mess with Us', The Wall Street Journal, 31 December 2005 – 1 January 2006. Even Charles Saatchi has caught the wave, 'subverting' the dealer system by launching the website YourGallery.com.

a landscape of ever more responsive, yielding, programmable commodities. No longer are mass audiences dictated mass-produced, prepackaged meanings; now the meeting between product and customer happens as if directly and individually, one-to-one, with each side demanding immediate interface and feedback. Outright acceptance or rejection may have been options appropriate for the closed object; what's required now is constant negotiation, vigilant involvement. In other words: consumption as a more dynamic environment of ongoing, interactive meaning production. In this way, contemporary market transactions find a quite suitable counterpart in those art-world forms that are said to supercede the studio and museum – namely, all those laboratory-like *Kunstverein*, those project rooms and, yes, ubiquitous lounges, as well as all the prosumer art that appoints them.

If the studio and museum stood for the lamentable division between the spheres of production and consumption, the lounge counters this with a space of fluid interchange between objects, activities and people, a connectivity to mend the split. What the lounge 'exhibits' is networking itself. And yet this too can be seen as a conciliation to the New Economy. The network is, after all, the exemplary figure of post-Fordism, compared to which all the former static, box-like arenas – the factories and unions, disciplines and vocations, parties and ideologies, all the bounded forms that had mediated the space between subjects and objects, securing the sense of stable interiority required for the projecting and investing of meaning from the one onto the other – have proven not nearly flexible enough. Such former 'molds' of enclosure now give way to what Gilles Deleuze has called '*modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point.'[17] Ergo the network, with its one-to-one connections and additive, combinatory logic replacing the organisation's former pyramidal hierarchy and hard external shell. The network privileges casual, weak ties over formal commitments so as to heighten the possibility of chanced-upon associational link-ups that lead outward from any one communicational nexus or group. As dot-com startups were among the first to prove, this is the new formula for success, in business as in culture: namely, a loose collection of intimates whose cryptic projects attain global buzz, thus optimising the structural capacities of constellated, overlapping networks, where production of authentic intensity is always already exteriorised as signification within the sprawling exchange system that motivates it. Or, put another way, practice as no longer isolated but always inclusive of and open to larger systems of exchange. Think of the YBAs and the 'Swinging London' phenomenon, or LA's fabled Chinatown art scene, or the Cologne milieu adored by 'Make Your Own Life', all examples of how the production of localness that such place-names imply is dependent upon its exportation for international consumption, and thus upon the abolition of the local as such. The same with fictive identities or other alluring logos – all gain definition only as functions within a larger, comprehensive set, as values emanating from a system.[18]

Here again the rage for conviviality in art gets expressed in the face of a larger crisis concerning social cohesion. As network connectivity obliges that objects lose their set boundaries to become more responsive, so too do subjects shed long-term loyalties and identifications to become better operators who mesh transparently with the system's mobile operations. With the rise of the network, the labour market fills with its own version of responsive commodities, as across-the-board pay scales are replaced by more personalised jobs – that is, by differentiated contracts laden with incentive clauses and bonuses based on individual performance expectations. One competes against oneself. To work at home and be your own boss means setting not only your own work hours and dress codes (like an artist!) but also performance criteria and production levels. The result is that the definition and value of labour becomes less social and more private, more abstract and intransitive. The goal of work is now to bulk-up one's resume and gather more contacts in anticipation of the inevitable layoff and the need to once again find new employment.

Given this context, it's hard to see how the networked forms of recent art, from relational aesthetics to multiple and fictive artist-identities, can be taken as inherently oppositional. On the contrary, at least on the level of form, they seem to not oppose the dominant system but 'surf' its leading edge, where they romanticise and idealise

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Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', October, vol.59, Winter 1992, p.4

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A single-functioning social network, excluding the other various networks it links to, supposedly includes on the average 125 members; the maximum is around 155. The introduction to the novel Reena Spaulings reports that '150 writers, professional and amateur ... contributed to' its writing. See Bernadette Corporation, Reena Spaulings, New York: Semiotext(e), 2004; R.A. Hill and R.I.M. Dunbar, 'Social Network Size in Humans', Human Nature, vol.14, no.1, pp.53–72; and Mark S. Gronovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', American Journal of Sociology, vol.78, no.6, May 1973, pp.1360–80

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John Kotter quoted in Richard Sennett, The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998, p.25

current conditions and thus serve as an ideological asset rather than a critique. Indeed, to claim the authenticity of a position 'outside' no longer automatically translates into resistance. As with subjects and objects, so too does the distinction between inside and outside get voided by the network structure. To be 'inside' the network already means being outside – or, as Harvard management guru John Kotter advises his students, it's now better 'to be on the outside rather than the inside' of organisations and institutions.[19] It's better, that is, to be a business consultant, or perhaps an 'infomediary' like Martha Stewart or Oprah Winfrey. Likewise, Anthony Davies and Simon Ford note the emergence of the 'culturepreneur' – 'a new "artist" ... that claims professional status as a "broker"; a mediator rather than producer.'[20]

Is this what's become of the *bricoleur*? Has that old 'jack of all trades' matured into a fragmented, maneuverable subject able to flit from one job or social circle to another, adopting whatever called-upon behaviour the situation requires, the self as diversified portfolio, as corporate enterprise? Is the *bricoleur* now merely a euphemism for today's 'flexible personality', the name Brian Holmes has coined for the form of subjectivation mandated by the New Economy – 'a new form of social control ... a distorted form of the artistic revolt against authoritarianism and standardisation'?[21] Holmes quotes Paolo Virno on the cynicism and 'unbounded opportunism' that characterise this new subject, 'who confronts a flux of interchangeable possibilities, keeping open as many as possible'. An ornithologist among birds, the flexible personality is 'into' many things, but refuses to say exactly what he or she 'is' or 'does'. Identity itself is approached opportunistically. Calculation becomes the practice of everyday life, and social life becomes yet one more object of practice, a constantly recoded network of potentially valuable contacts and associates, so many articulated differences to exploit for signification. One vigilantly works the scene. 'The true opportunist,' Holmes concludes, 'consents to a fresh advantage within any new language game, even if it is political. Politics collapses into the flexibility and rapid turnover times of market relations.'

In a recent interview, the New York-based artist Aleksandra Mir, who has tracked aspects of the New Economy in her own work, summed up many of the practical issues confronting artists today. 'I still use the basic entrepreneurial skills I learned from earlier practices,' Mir says, 'how to do something from nothing, how to drum up resources on sheer enthusiasm, how to find exchange values in everything from favours, swaps to corporate sponsorships, how to execute a ton of various tasks single-handedly. [...] There is no clear-cut formula ever of what will happen, but there is a steady continuum in this incoherence.'[22] What I've tried to add to such a description is simply a vantage from which to problematise this terrain to a degree appropriate to the aims of art. That recent expressions of those aims – fluidity and indeterminacy, shared creativity, freedom within community, utopia – often get phrased in the transactional terms and figures of market relations proves just how boundless the current reach of economic reasoning is. Once we've completely disabused ourselves of the fiction of artistic autonomy, is the market really the only arena imaginable in which to enact 'free' subjectivity? Does the entrepreneur only model subjects who 'freely' instrumentalise themselves? If so, which artistic acts are still able to ground themselves in a recognition of such conditions?

If, as many argue, what most characterises our historical moment is nothing less than the end of the social, this itself could open certain opportunities – specifically, a chance to rethink the possibilities of community over society.[23] Here the role of art, especially certain developments associated with relational aesthetics, could be incalculable. But given that such work has hardly gotten off the ground, and that, until it does, the grip of the market continues to tighten, many of the values promoted by today's art world – spectacular but hollow identity, loose and numerous affiliations, hyper-mobility and circulation, opportunistic interventions as if in any situation or ensemble anywhere, the recombining of 'data' indefinitely – all these risk romanticising the reigning logic of exchangeability and the very real dangers of our increasing vulnerability to the moment-to-moment fluctuations of global capital. 'Do you have a corporate mission for the company "Aleksandra Mir"?,' interviewer Kimberly Lloyd asks at one point. A bit baldly put, perhaps, but not a bad question. And questions like that are not a bad place to start.

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Anthony Davies and Simon Ford, 'Art Capital', Art Monthly vol.213, February 1998, pp.1–4

21
Brian Holmes, 'The Flexible Personality', Hieroglyphs of the Future, Zagreb: Arkzin, 2003

22
Kimberly Lloyd, 'Interview: Aleksandra Mir', M Publication, vol.3, 2004, p.166

23
'The End of the Social' is famously the name of a chapter in Jean Baudrillard, In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983. For more upbeat formulations, see Jacques Donzelot, 'The Promotion of the Social', Economy and Society, vol.17, no.3, August 1998, pp.395–427; Nikolas Rose, 'The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government', Economy and Society, vol.25, no.3, August 1996, pp.327–56; Miami Theory Collective, ed., Community at Loose Ends, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991; and Bill Readings, The University in Ruins, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996, especially chapters 10 and 12