

Press releases, like other species of promissory note, bind a projected quantity, a calculated sum of information within the limits of whatever standards dictate the scale of its economy. It is as credit that this information will enter into the hands of readers. Yet the terms of debtor and creditor are here somewhat dispersed. Elements of visual presentation are pledged to paper supplements, entrusting viewers' interest to their display, underwritten by the backing of 'my good name.' Such a trust secures the projection of a bottom line, a ground to count on for what is exhibited to vision. To be sure, the pressure of, and promised release from the liabilities of reading will have already enjoined us in a certain pact that sometimes will be taken to account. Yet information's forecasted returns within this restricted economy are usually as inflated as they are emphatic. I hereby promise the bearer of this note etc., etc., etc.

The question of what provides support to any given claim of value is bound up with faith in a guarantor. Whether this concerns the credibility of the state's representative right, the marketing of values, or the design of corporate logos, faith is sponsored by a sedimentary layer of linguistic authority that acts as backing to any material composition whatsoever. Such is the case with the manufacturer's material description "antique gold" for the minting of a solid brass token: a specimen of which supplies an element of the work Art should be... etc. As appearances attest, the value of gold, an ostensible shelter from crises in the legitimacy of financial markets, maps a nominal value onto one of the cheapest metal ores money can buy. Incorporated into the casting of this coin's die, a double-sided exergue vacillates between proclamations of equivalent value and self-evidence: TERTIUM COMPARATIONIS (Equivalence of two terms in a third) and RES IPSA LOQUITUR (The thing speaks for itself). This token is displayed together with a vitrined, digitally manipulated photograph of painted film stock, which provides the second element of Art should be... etc. For both of these components, auxiliary systems of linguistic and material support bracket the volatility of self-accrediting signs.

27 years ago Jack Goldstein wrote: "Art should be a trailer for the future." According to the movie's typical economy for its use of film: standard measures of time facilitate the surrender of passing images to a predictable future; a time defrayed by durational conventions to which an average rate of interest is expected to accrue. But linear duration itself is accorded legitimacy by other temporal measures that a race toward the final credits at 24fps cannot alone lay claim. For example, in the popular history of the movies, the text inscribed across the ream of film which provides the graphic frame for MGM's lion – ARS GRATIA ARTIS (art for art's sake) – sought legitimacy, in the 1920s, by citing the XIXth century credo of modern aesthetic experience in the language and ornamental forms of antiquity. The graphic problem faced by this logo's author, Howard Dietz, consisted in providing backing to the studio's incorporated pictures for the foreseeable future. Dietz resolved this

problem by investing the language of autonomy with the clout of Pax Romana (or perhaps Alma Mater, of which Dietz's own, Columbia University, provided inspiration for this image); and this during another moment of crisis in economic legitimacy. An image of the old establishes a retrograde subject for film's great leap toward a newly minted relationship between audiences and images.

This logo is still with us, emblazoning all manner of merchandise beyond images on film. Its means of technological support have recently shifted to pixilated information in an age where the movies, like yesterday's doyens of world economic power, are rapidly on the wane. An armature survives in this framing device of an experience of images that film began to depose not long before the logo was committed to celluloid. If this image once flickered on film as an assurance that its accreditation was perennial because self-justifying, today it is rendered and sustained by support systems on whose shifting ground its claim is still wholly dependent. As evidence of what has been written out of time's balance sheet by such decrees of abiding sovereignty: this icon casts an external light on its precarious foundations. Regardless of whether its language is legible, or whether, for that matter, anyone in the audience is interested, this image is written into an extraordinarily tenuous history of support given and received. In light of more current transformations in the projected future of the filmic object of Goldstein's maxim, we might ask: What of the present will have flickered in images from the past?

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