

The group show “Culture and Recreation” (“Kultur und Freizeit”) presents a collection of international positions that focus upon current questions relating to life and work in the art field. Where does work end and leisure begin? For so-called “cultural workers”, drawing this particular boundary is especially difficult, if not yet a completely obsolete enterprise. And yet there is an increasing number ‘of us’; more and more people decide to work in this field or engage with art in their free time.

Towards the end of the last century, the traditional three-sector hypothesis (extraction of raw materials, manufacturing, and services) typifying many economies around the globe reached its ceiling. Inasmuch as the previous century in the ‘Western world’ was still determined by the transition from industrialisation to so-called service societies, nowadays it seems necessary to develop a theory of a fourth or even a fifth sector that take account of the effects of an increasing digitalisation and technologisation. They make a more rapid and globalised distribution of information both possible and desirable. Correspondingly, different definitions make this fourth sector a site for information services as well as other areas from the tertiary sector, requiring a particular set of intellectual skills and a high degree of responsibility. Other hypotheses assign services in the field of leisure and entertainment to this fourth sector. In any event, with its wealth of information, knowledge and entertainment, it is envisaged that this emerging fourth sector has the potential to eclipse the classical service sector.

In keeping with this definition, the fourth sector also becomes an operational field for the art system: ranging from recent theoretically acknowledged “research-based artists” engaged in a brand of documentary production of knowledge, all the way to the superficial event spectacles of a, say, Damien Hirst, it is possible to cover the entire spectrum between information and pleasure. Artists, curators and various other protagonists are expected to disseminate cutting-edge knowledge and skills, track down the so-called phenomena of the zeitgeist, but at the same time are incorporated into the field of entertainment, leisure and hobbies, at least as far as the moment of reception is concerned. “Culture and Recreation” (“Kultur und Freizeit”) is a favoured title for agencies in municipal departments of art and culture in Germany (also used in other countries in the appropriate translation), duly illustrating the necessary administrative and bureaucratic measures within the field of art and culture. Culture and leisure are simultaneously an important marketing tool for each and every city.

How do creatives deal with such transformations that elevate them to influential players within an emerging and increasingly powerful economic sector? Do changes of this kind infiltrate their respective artistic practices? How do they reflect and use emerging technologies in their works?

What is the value of artistic work when it is ultimately perceived as entertainment by the general public? Art, culture and leisure are all part of the ‘other’—the antithesis of work. But what happens when art and culture are actually the stuff of one’s own work? What constitutes leisure time in this instance?

The relationship between art and work is not easy to define, inasmuch as it is heavily dependent upon individual perspective. Art is supposed to motivate and inspire employees and colleagues—it is certainly intended to extend their individual horizons, to improve the climate at work, to demonstrate social and cultural responsibility, but ultimately to intensify productivity. Significantly, “Art Works” has been the motto of the Deutsche Bank Collection since 1979.

Art infiltrates office buildings as do the emblems and gestures of our leisure time: one places photographs of one’s loved ones on the office desk alongside one’s personal coffee cup, seasonally decorated or with the aid of a low-maintenance potted plant. When employers avail themselves of such a gesture, an institution like the so-called “Casual Friday” ensues. Employees in certain large corporations with strict dress codes are allowed to turn up for work on a Friday dressed in more casual attire. “At home at work. At work at home.” Feel at home when at work. However, this raises the question of whether diffuse boundaries ultimately benefit the employer more than they do the employee.

Ever since the New Economy boom by the very latest, culture and leisure have been increasingly integrated into working life. Internet start-ups and other young, burgeoning companies within the field of media and information technology celebrate their attested modernity and avant-garde status by decking out their office corridors with football tables rather than art.

The art world can no longer resist this trend: it too is becoming more global, more stressful, more competitive and marketoriented. Could a casual Friday” also save us from burn out? A visit to any art academy anywhere in the country will quickly reveal the preferred mode of relaxation among students of art: table tennis. We would also like to give you the recreational opportunity in this exhibition to revive yourself from art, from our work, by playing table tennis. If you need an opponent, please feel free to ask in the office – we are always in need of a break.

-Kristina Scepanski

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