

If you are hungry, you can eat a burrito; you can put a picture of a burrito on the wall; you can monetize a canvas with the word burrito. Alternatively, you can speak the word "Burrito"; in that case, something comes out of your mouth instead of going in.

However, you can't have your burrito and eat it too. The word "Burrito" in an abstract painting can neither be eaten, nor spoken, nor depicted, nor even read. It has been separated from any underlying. It has no survival value as food, and no aesthetic or emotional value as a sign of food. It can only be flipped from hand to hand.

The history of finance, like the history of Western painting, moves in the direction of ever-greater abstraction. The philosopher and derivatives trader Elie Ayache points out that advanced financial instruments are so fully abstract that they no longer refer back to any "underlying" whatsoever. They are blank forms, Ayache says, pure contingencies; traders may use them to literally "write the future."

Instead intrinsic value can only be defined in terms of a work's functioning as a financial instrument. FLIP ART, as The New York Times has put it, "is just about the nearest thing in today's fragmented global art scene that approximates to a coherent movement." It's only when the art is "flipped," that it accretes intrinsic value.

Today abstract art needs to be purged of expression, and of Greenbergian self-reflection, as much as it has been purged of extrinsic representation. It no longer even makes sense to simulate currency, as in the post-representational practice of Picasso, Warhol, and J.S.G. Boggs. Now we are expecting turbo-appropriation of trends, sub-prime speculation on collectively approved materials and art stacks to be bought in bulk. This turbo-appropriationism will in turn provide as much political effect as accelerationist strategies in art, speculations on anonymous materials and real estate exchanges in art fairs.

This doesn't mean that I am actually liberated by this art from worldly concerns. The constraints of political economy can, and do, get in the way of aesthetics. A starving person is blocked from full aesthetic enjoyment. It is only when I am able to taste the BURRITO that I enjoy the delicacies of cuisine, otherwise "I feel nothing at all".

- Steven Shaviro

Flame was invented in 2010, based on the virus of the same name, to filter through relevant information and feed it back into the gallery system.

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