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HANS-JÖRG HEUSSER AND KORNELIA IMESCH

Preface

This book was inspired by a symposium entitled 'art & branding' conducted by the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIAR) in collaboration with the German art historian and corporate consultant WOLFGANG ULLRICH¹ in the summer of 2004. The aim of the symposium was to raise awareness among art historians of the significance of the branding phenomenon for modern and contemporary art, and to initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue on the subject of today's brand world and its manifold links with art and the art system. Accordingly, the speakers came from a variety of areas; besides artists and art historians, the symposium was attended by marketing specialists, economists, cultural entrepreneurs, design experts and branding specialists.²

As the symposium also revealed, more and more companies today use art as a branding tool. At the same time, brand culture and branding strategies have become central characteristics of the art system. Creating and propagating brands and providing information about their peculiarities and qualities have become decisive market factors, both in business and the art world. Many contemporary artists are increasingly taking their cue from the strategies employed in marketing, advertising or fashion. They position themselves and their works in the art system and on the market by developing themselves, their art or art enterprises they have created into brands. Many artists also collaborate directly with companies.

However, considerable numbers of artists maintain a critical attitude towards the world of brands and logos, and frequently pursue a policy of appropriation, undermining and alienating brands and brand worlds with the aim of questioning labels, logos and branding strategies. Activist artists who are critical of brands often use Internet art and work as hackers; this is a kind of ethically and politically motivated 'reconquista' of mental and public space occupied by brands and branding. In their virtual, bogus companies, these 'brand managers' ironically parody the global corporate habitus and – like the etoy group, for example – sabotage the brand strategies of the global corporations on the battlefields of cyberspace.

Although the aestheticization of economics and the economization of culture as well as a wide variety of aspects of today's culture industry have been the subject of



1 *art & branding*, programm-cover of the symposium at the SIAR, Zurich, 2–3 July 2004

numerous investigations for several years, to date there have been scarcely any analyses of the extent to which the branding ideas and strategies established in the business world have been adopted in the theory and practice of modern and contemporary art and its market system. HANS-JÖRG HEUSSER, Director of the SIAR, became aware of this correlation during his work as an art consultant for large corporations. He presented his first ideas on the subject of 'Art, Branding and Art History' in a lecture at the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities in Los Angeles in March 2004. On the basis of this lecture, the SIAR then made the interaction between economic and artistic strategies of branding and brand management the topic of the symposium mentioned above. KORNELIA IMESCH, Head of the Scientific Forum at the SIAR, conducted a seminar on the same subject during the 2004/5 winter semester at the University of Zurich.

This publication explores the complex problems into which the conference provided insights, and attempts to elaborate on these from both an economic and an art-historical perspective. Although most of the examples and articles used in this book to examine and present the research topic are from German-speaking countries, the questions it raises will probably be of international interest, as both branding and contemporary art have become global phenomena. Publishing the book in English allows the subject to be appropriately expanded and provides an international slant on the discussion that has been initiated.

The first chapter, *Brands and branding. History and theory in art and business*, discusses the history and importance of branding as a cultural technique in business and the arts, past and present. Various marketing strategies and models of an artistic exploration of brand culture and its vocabulary are presented, which also include brand hacking – undermining and altering the brand essence.

FRANZ LIEBL analyses the economic, theoretical, historical and cultural dimension of the brand concept, and explores ‘culture jamming’ – the interface of a consumer-critical, creative debate between artists and the world of brands.

Starting from prototypes of ‘corporate design’ used by artists as methods of self-marketing, WOLFGANG ULLRICH examines various artistic models, positions and strategies of a critical exploration of brand culture. He focuses on shared characteristics and marks of excellence, which he mainly sees in the formation of conceptual values, images and aura. Artists thus prove to be competitors and role models for brand designers and brand managers.

JUERG ALBRECHT provides insights into the conceptual alphabet and the problems of the dialectic of art and branding from an art-historical and philosophical perspective, as well as the history of critical reception: original and copy, authenticity and law, imitation and forgery and the paradoxes characteristic of the concept of the work and the original, and the authenticity of the fictitious and the originality of the appropriative.

WALTER GRASSKAMP takes the Nazarenes and the Pre-Raphaelites as an example of the importance of branding for modern art, achieved through the outline of a history of artistic styles in the nineteenth century and the inception of ‘isms’ and the concept of the avant-garde.

The second chapter, *Art as a branding tool*, examines the strategies of establishing, promoting, strengthening and communicating brands by means of cultural sponsorship, art programmes and architectural activities.

MANFRED SCHWAIGER highlights the links between brand strength, corporate reputation and corporate success. He examines the efficiency of experience-oriented cultural sponsorship as a communications tool that can be used in a variety of ways, and analyses the economic advantages that indeed result for companies that systematically and strategically deploy cultural communications by way of assuming their frequently cited ‘corporate social responsibility’.

From the perspective of culture and cultural studies, SAMUEL HERZOG AND SIMON BAUR discuss what art programmes can achieve as the branding tools of European corporations – not only for the companies and staff in question, but also for art, artists

and the public interested in the arts. On the basis of selected art and cultural projects, the authors analyse the objectives and programmes behind such activities, revealing their advantages and disadvantages.

Taking architecture as his point of departure, **PHILIP URSPRUNG** examines the paradoxical contradictions of an efficient and effective branding policy. These lie between the poles of the rapid changeability of global corporations and the slowness and permanence that are fundamental characteristics of buildings. Taking the epi-centre stores developed by Rem Koolhaas and Herzog & de Meuron for the cult brand Prada as an example, he analyses the successful architectural branding solutions developed by these star architects, who have themselves become brands.

The third chapter, *Branding in art – artists' branding*, presents the individual artistic brand, gender-specific and virtual branding strategies and brand-hacking manipulations as well as branding tools that have now become accepted practice in the art system.

Taking Duchamp's *Fountain* as his point of departure, **JUERG ALBRECHT** provides a retrospective history of the critical reception of this ready-made incunabulum, which, however, can be continued indefinitely. Tying in with the conceptual positions and history of critical reception already developed in his article in the first chapter on the artefact as a brand, in this text he retraces the 'birth' and 'curriculum' of the Duchampsian artistic icon and its paradoxical potential as a 'brand'.

REGULA FREULER explores the fictitious dimension of brands and branding processes. She analyses the aesthetically, politically and ethically based procedures of Internet artists and artist groups. Many of these activists, who manipulate corporate strategies and images, appropriating their web identity and aesthetics in order to beat them at their own game, perceive their activities as a 're-conquest' of the intellectual space colonized by corporations and their brands. At times, however, they cause the latter to adjust their branding strategies in order to counter these guerrilla tactics.

Taking as examples three artistic positions, **KORNELIA IMESCH** examines the way in which artists appropriate the world of brands, consumerism, advertising and the media – primarily by investigating or parodying gender-specifically determined lifestyle aspects and the potential promises made, or, reflecting the current trend towards branding, the way artists position themselves as brands which requires the 'products' themselves to play only a secondary role.

HOLGER LIEBS discusses branding elements and phenomena that are characteristic of today's art system. Taking as his point of departure prominent events and exhibitions, such as the MoMA show in Berlin in 2004, he discusses some of the strategies

with which art is acquired as a product and made accessible as an experience today. This is also due to the concept of museums as theme parks similar to brand lands in which the actual 'product', again, has become secondary.

We would like to express our thanks to the authors who helped in making this reader possible.

- 1 We would like to take this opportunity to thank Wolfgang Ullrich once again for his fruitful and efficient collaboration.
- 2 *Prelude*: Harry Walter, artist and author, Stuttgart.
Art and business: between affinity and a forced partnership: Franz Liebl, Universität der Künste, Berlin; Martin Strauss, artist and freelance author, Vienna/Munich; Wolfgang Ullrich, art historian, lecturer and corporate consultant, Munich; Martin Heller, Heller Enterprises, Zurich.
Branding in art, business and advertising: Renzo di Renzo, Artistic Director, Benetton Fabbrica, Treviso; Res Ingold, artist, Chairman of the Board of ingold airlines/Professor at the Academy of Fine Art, Munich; Johannes M. Hedinger, artist, COM&COM, Zurich; Swetlana Heger, artist, Berlin (represented by Martin Schibli, curator, Berlin/Helsingborg).
Company branding by means of art: Anne Keller Dubach, Head of Brand Communication, Swiss Re, Zurich; Simon Grand, RISE Management

Research, University of St. Gallen; Ruedi Baur, integral ruedi baur, Zurich and Paris, Head of the 'Design2context' Research Institute, School of Art and Design, Zurich.

Brand-hacking by means of art: Verena Krieger, art historian, University of Stuttgart; etoy.HAEFLIGER and etoy.MARCOS, etoy.CORPORATION; Daniel Pflumm, artist, Berlin.

Branding between the art world and business culture: Barbara Basting, editor, arts section, 'Tages-Anzeiger', Zurich; Alex Murray-Leslie, artist, Chicks on Speed, Berlin; Peter Bläuer, curator and Director of LISTE, The Young Art Fair Basel; Eliza Thoenen Steinle, artist, Zurich; Hedy Graber, Head of Culture and Social Division of Migros-Genossenschafts-Bund, Zurich.

The sections of the symposium were moderated by Wolfgang Ullrich and Juerg Albrecht, Regula Freuler, Hans-Jörg Heusser and Kornelia Imesch of the SIAR. See also the statements of the participants at the symposium in: *bulletin 2/04*.

