

## The future of art is feminist

The society that we live in is not feminist, and so it will not promote feminist art. Does this mean that we should stop making feminist art? No, of course not, because feminist art can only exist in a society that is not feminist. A feminist society would naturally produce feminist art and simply call it “art”.

If we look back, we see that the production of art has always been in the hands of the powerful. Society as a whole has never participated much in the process. The ideas reflected by the art of a given period are generally the ideas of the groups of power of that period. By necessity, these powerful groups promote art that helps them grow and perpetuate themselves, they are not going to promote art that by definition implies a redistribution of power in society. And this is precisely what feminism proposes.

The arts world is less feminist than society as a whole, and so does not promote feminist art. It is not difficult to imagine that the success of feminist art would have interesting artistic and financial consequences for existing art collections. Moreover, a feminist arts world would contain more women, and the addition of a large number of people to any group can produce a redistribution of power. This is why the mass media, owned by the same powerful groups, spread negative stereotypes around feminism. Because for feminist demands to be met things have to change.

Feminist art, therefore, like all good art, aspires to advance society, not just reflect it. Feminist art is in the vanguard of art because it puts the human dimension back into art, while at the same time projecting society towards a more advanced future. Feminist art can act as a bridge between an art world trapped in mercantile mannerisms and a society that doesn't perceive the arts world to have any greater function than self-glorification. There is a clear lack of coherence between what the arts world says and what it does, which diminishes its credibility in the eyes of the rest of society. Nowadays, contemporary art is not generally perceived to advance society, but then it doesn't. An elite can only consider itself an elite if it is ahead.

The arts world is not ahead of society, but behind it, and it demonstrates this through its continual promotion of outdated values. Not least because the valuation of the work produced by artists is more sexist and racist than the valuation of the work of most employees in the average company. It is enough to look at the proportion of work by white men represented in most galleries and museums to see this. If this proportion was representative of reality, either in relation to the total number of artists or in relation to the population as a whole, the human race would have become extinct long ago. The statistics are overwhelming. And this is without entering the debate of how much artists get paid for their work depending on race and gender.

The methods of production and distribution that the arts world promotes are also outdated. While the rest of society devotes itself to distributing massive amounts of information across the world through all sorts of electronic devices, the arts world still worships originals and scarcity and adapts new technologies to old conventions.

This habit creates interesting situations such as ‘limited editions’ of video and photography. Limited editions are, as the word says, limited, but by the restrictions of the medium, not choice. Etching plates get worn out, gold is expensive, it takes a long time to produce certain objects in a certain way. A series of oil paintings is going to be limited even if a whole lifetime is devoted to producing it. Contrary to this, one of the advancements of video and photography is precisely their ease of reproduction, which if not infinite, is at least massive.

To create a limited edition of photographs or videos is an affectation and the only aim is elitist and monetary, to restrict access and increase the final price of the product.

To promote exclusivity contributes to the mystification of art and increases the potential for speculation in the market. Art benefits as an investment, but not as art, because limiting access prevents the artistic discipline from advancing.

When we listen to a piece by, let’s say, Rachmaninoff on a CD, or on the radio, or in a live concert, or through a web page, the quality of the sound might be better or worse, and we may enjoy the experience more or less, but the artistic quality of Rachmaninoff’s music is not altered by the method of reproduction. The same happens with literature, Shakespeare has the same artistic quality whether read on screen or on a hand printed original edition full of dust. One might cause eye ache and the other a sense of historical moment and perhaps allergic sneezes, but Shakespeare’s quality as an author is not affected.

Technology has changed the way we enjoy music, literature and film.

Visual art, however, despises reproduction and demands that we go to a specific place to observe an original. Even if the original is a small digital photograph that could be better appreciated in a book than behind a piece of glass. Imagine if only the original scores and their contemporary interpretations in music, the original manuscript in literature or the master print in film were valued. It would be a waste and music, literature and film would have stagnated as disciplines. Which is what has happened to visual art. Its cult of the original and scarcity, particularly now that there are techniques of reproduction that allow alternative ways of enjoying art, increases the prices unnecessarily and makes the art market depend on a reduced number of buyers. The general public is left out and with it its potential to buy and enjoy art.

Art is further prevented from advancing by the artificial separation of disciplines. Despite the fact that the method of production doesn’t determine what art is, the techniques of mass production are still not associated with art, but instead, with advertising. To distinguish what is art from what is not, based on the method of production and its reach, is both artificial and unnecessary. All artistic vanguards have actively sought out the latest technologies to express their ideas. Instead of fleeing from mass production and reproduction, from mobile phones, the Internet and alternative formats, feminist art benefits from using them and should make them its own.

In today’s democracies with advanced technologies, people have unprecedented access to information, power of association and distribution. It is time to use it to break the negative stereotypes that surround feminism and to promote art that is more accessible.

Because even if we live in a period in which the levels of education are high, the general public does not actively engage with contemporary art because it perceives it as a joke. A need for change is in the air. So, does it make sense for artists to try to belong to a system that can be intellectually and financially accessed by less and less people and that promotes an outdated system of values? The art market buys and sells art, so its activity is not artistic, but financial. The academic world establishes rules and conventions to try and administer artistic knowledge. To adapt artistic production to the market and institutions is to put the cart before the horse. An advanced feminist art, technically and intellectually accessible for the majority of people would increase the interest of the public. An interested public would be an engaged public. If the public feels that by encouraging feminist art it participates in something important for humanity, funding it won't be a problem. There is no need to ask for permission.

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