

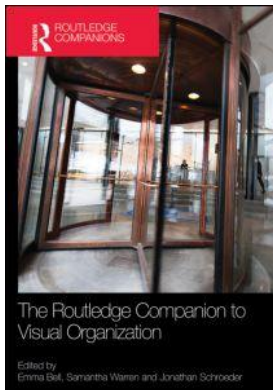
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Art, artist, and aesthetics for organizational visual strategy

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Art, artist, and aesthetics for organizational visual strategy

Pierre Guillet de Monthoux

Introduction

What are the underlying implications in seeing organizations as art? Are artists participants in such visual organizing, and, if so, how do they engage in the process? In organization studies, questions pertaining to art and artists gained relevance when the aesthetic angle began to gain respectability as a valid benchmark for sizing up the visual in organizing (Ramirez 1991; Strati 1999; Linstead and Höpfl 2000; Guillet de Monthoux 2004). Although studies of organizational ‘symbols’ and ‘culture’ touched upon the subject first, it was when organization scholars began to take ‘aesthetics’ seriously that art and artists became central to their work (e.g. Strati 2009). In the 1980s, it took future organizational strategy professor Rafael Ramirez considerable effort to make his thesis supervisor Eric Trist – at the time ‘guru’ of the dominating social systems approach – accept his pioneering doctoral work on organizational beauty in organization studies (Ramirez 1991). Eventually, however, the ‘aesthetic turn’ in organization studies made fields traditionally associated with the humanities and liberal arts relevant to organization scholars as well. But how can philosophy, art history, and details from contemporary art scenes inform our investigation and understanding of the visual strategies for organizing?

In an attempt to provide a systematic answer to these questions, this chapter follows a then-and-now chronology. The first part, *classical aesthetics strategies*, is an overview of typical cases where art and organization strategy have been connected in the Western Hemisphere over the past two centuries; the second part deals with *contemporary aesthetics strategies*.

Classical strategy focuses on two classical uses of visual strategies: the official aesthetic organizing of the political *state* and the commercial *market*. What can we learn from art organizing in the formation of nation states and what sort of artist is likely to be a good organizer? After that, we account for how marketing aesthetics inspired the emergence of commercial markets and this, in turn, heralded the role of artists who designed products into coherent brands and helped to frame the market as an art show exposing the work of artist marketers.

The second part, on *contemporary strategy*, explores art and artists who accomplish new visual organizing by differentiating themselves from the classics of the past. Artists after the 1980s increasingly have engaged in visual strategies that strikingly transcend the classic official use of art by artists in the last two centuries. While mainstream media, marketing, and advertising

today perpetuate this classic official art in a global postmodern spirit, recent examples help demonstrate how contemporary artists do it in new ways. They are sick and tired of the postmodern condition and now propose their help as researchers to rediscover reality as art. Therefore, a new kind of reality art is emerging, and, in addition to the standard curriculum, artists gain competency as reality coaches during their tenure in art school. When art and artists get involved and apply the new kind of aesthetics contemporaries label 'relational,' new visual strategies for organizing emerge.

Throughout the chapter, we will apply aesthetics to describe the value that only art and artists can add to visual strategies. In one example, we will see how the role of artists as organizers of the state was interdependent on the emergence of a German aesthetic philosophy that made public sense of their work. In Anglo Saxon-rooted marketing aesthetics, we will see how artists and art became valued as visually organizing commercial activity. As we consider the implications of seeing organizations as art, we will place different aesthetic spectacles on the nose of the reader; this will hopefully enable him/her to reflect on and consider what qualities and what competencies turn something into art or someone into an artist. When it comes to art and artists, the visual is never a matter of direct perception only. Where a philosophical, aesthetic point of view is lacking, what we see will remain aesthetically invisible! Perception and philosophy must go hand in hand for an aesthetics strategy to have a chance to work ... as artwork!

Classical aesthetics strategies

Organization as a work of art: the case of the nation state

Currently, the primary venues for the movies of German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003) are community art cinema clubs. For many years after World War II, however, her 1934 film *Triumph of the Will* and her 1937 picture *Olympia* were not available for circulation and viewing, as they had been banned for celebrating Nazi ideology.¹ To be sure, Riefenstahl was one of Hitler's favorite artists, but, when she was charged with being a Nazi propagandist, she denied the accusation with what seemed to her a perfectly plausible explanation: Hitler had explicitly *selected* her, a free artist, not a party hack, to film the Nuremberg Party Congress in 1933 and the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936. While her statement implied that being an artist freed her of any guilt for the content of her films, the very fact that she was an artist provided her with the leverage to empower the Nazi cause. And, while she was no advertising consultant *per se*, her mesmerizing scenes on the silver screen projected far beyond what Hitler and his propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels could ever imagine. The aesthetic value she added to the visual was devastating.

Riefenstahl was certainly not alone; she had numerous colleagues whose works have filled art film archives with movies that aesthetically mobilized political organizations. In addition to the Nazis, other totalitarian regimes like the Fascists and the Communists have used cinematic art to galvanize twentieth-century moviegoers into political enthusiasts. Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), a philosophical critic of this totalitarianism, wondered if art would lose its magical attraction in times of mass-media art. To the contrary, of course, art grew into an even more powerful strategic-visual instrument. While it might be claimed that the magical attraction of single art pieces waned, the growth of the organizational power of mediated art is without challenge. Unfortunately, Benjamin was terribly wrong!

When watching the pseudo-documentaries of Russian director Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) – I recommend his masterpiece *The Battleship Potemkin* and *Ten Days that Shook the World* – contemporary students of filmography are, in fact, viewing the Stalinist visual art

strategy that helped organize Soviet society. In addition, when viewers get carried away by the films of Stanley Kubrick (1928–1999), they also need to remember the respect Kubrick had for the uncle of his German-born wife. Furthermore, at the same time the Nazis were executing their Holocaust genocide, Veit Harlan (1899–1964) wrote and directed his infamous movie *Jud Süß* (1940),² which promoted pro-German anti-Semitism. Politicians traditionally have made a very efficient as well as a very terrifying use of art as an organizational power. At the outset, it is important to understand that tradition and its supporting aesthetics.

‘Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,’ sing the victorious Germans – yesterday on the battlefield and today mostly at World Cup soccer matches. In 1952, German President Theodor Heuss (1884–1963) agreed to reinstate the old hymn as the national anthem of the new GFR, although by that time it had been mixed with the infamous Horst-Wessel song and used as Hitler’s national-socialist anthem. Heuss wanted a brand-new anthem, but Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967) insisted upon the old one. Adenauer did, however, substitute a revised third verse that began with more democratic words ‘Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit’ (Unity and Justice and Freedom) in place of the earlier nationalistic ‘Deutschland, Deutschland.’ The fact that the third democratic verse and not the earlier pompously patriotic one became legally protected in 1990 as a symbol of the GFR indicates that the real organizational power survived in the music and not in words. In 1967, the German publishing house Bote & Bock made public the latest official military band arrangement of the old song. This case provides an excellent example of how closely an audio-visual strategy for organizing is connected to how artists work inside organizations long before the modern nation state employed strategizing.

On the 12 February birthday of Roman-German Emperor Franz II in 1797, the ‘Deutschland’ version of the song was first performed at the old Burgtheater in Vienna. Shortly afterward, its proud composer Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) blended it into his string quartet Op.76, no. 3, which was printed in 1799 and subsequently became famous as the Kaiserquartett (see Guillet de Monthoux 2009). By then, the work was already known as Haydn’s hymn. Its text was conceived as a prayer for the Kaiser and almost immediately became a powerful and widely diffused musical symbol in service of the Austrian monarchy. Haydn had an impressive track record for successfully hailing and celebrating both divine and worldly powers in his creations, and, while his works gave glory to specific elites, they also loosened up and animated otherwise stiff feudal organization. One reason why some politicians hesitate to retain artists is that aesthetics strategies are more risky than other safer though less powerful propaganda techniques.

This makes art special in comparison with other strategic instruments of power, domination, and propaganda. Art does not just harness ruling power, however, and its legitimizing effect must always be considered in tandem with its propensity for organizational change. This might be one lesson drawn from the case of an Austrian Kaiserlied now in service of German democracy. Haydn can serve as a prototype for artist-organizers who easily provide special audio-visual powers to their organization. What kind of artist is likely to be a strategic asset though? Let us try to build a profile of this individual by considering Haydn as a paradigmatic artist-organizer and discern how different he was from the virtuoso Mozart and the genius Beethoven, both less suited to the task.

Looking for the ‘artist-organizer’

Haydn’s contemporary colleagues such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven knew the composer simply as ‘Papa Haydn.’ They saw him as an artist respected for his gentle character and orderly style of life; he was certainly not perceived as a misunderstood rebel. With the exception of an eight-year period in Vienna between 1749 and 1757, Haydn spent

his immensely productive life as an artist-organizer. He landed a tenured contract in the service of the court of Prince Esterhazy and quickly rose from the position of Vice Kapellmeister to Kapellmeister, a position that put him in charge of the Esterhazy orchestra and its 20–25 musicians and gave Haydn all the responsibilities of a full-fledged art manager. As was the protocol in such princely households, Haydn became an artist kept firmly in check by precise rules and regulations carefully written down in a very detailed document. His life was regulated by the hierarchy of the estate of Esterhazy and his castle Esterhaza, which had been recently erected in the spirit of Versailles, the most glorious court of Europe. In addition to the halls and salons, a large theatre and a smaller stage for puppet performances were parts of the court property. In the summer season, Haydn was responsible for programming, rehearsing, and staging a performance at each venue every night. Prince Nikolaus graciously offered free tickets to all performances to his party, subjects, and occasional guests. In reality then, Haydn at Esterhaza was actually the director of a huge audio-visual performance manufacture with an impressive output: the seasons of 1782 and 1783, for example, offered 90 and 105 performances. Out of the 125 shows produced in 1786, only 9 operas were recycled, while 8 were brand-new creations for that season only. Haydn presumably wrote at least one of these operas. During his tenure, Haydn composed 14 operas for Esterhaza, but this was only a part of the commitment specified by his contract. In addition to these tasks, Haydn was also responsible for music for the church and chapels of the castle, and this resulted in many masses and oratorios. Hiring and firing performing artists was also on his 'to-do' list. Above all, however, his first priority was helping to develop Esterhazy's audio-visual strategy, which was so important for maintaining public image and political relations.

In 1773, for example, Empress Maria Theresa attended an opera performed by marionettes and was so impressed she invited the show to Schönbrunn, her Vienna residence. And in 1763, when the Prince was on a mission to elect a new Kaiser in Frankfurt am Main, his fireworks and illumination of the city were reportedly an exquisite event. All the electors put on impressive shows, but the young Johann Wolfgang Goethe noted that Nikolaus' offering was the most beautiful and magical of all. As an artist-organizer Haydn received routine payment far exceeding the scattered earnings he had obtained freelancing in Vienna. His organizational importance is underlined by his listing in the 'house officers' of the Prince, where Haydn's position of Kapellmeister was ranked third. As a bonus, he seemed to have enjoyed great freedom to do projects for performances and publication outside of his main duties.

His primary responsibility, however, was inside the organization where music in all its forms accompanied all worldly and religious projects of the Prince. As inconceivable as it would be to marry, christen, or bury without music, secular events such as masked balls, hunting parties, and sundry anniversaries also demanded music specifically composed for the event. Haydn's impressive productions catered to all these audio-visual demands, especially those of the Prince himself, the CEO-proprietor of Haydn's courtly corporation and the one who proudly played new music written by his beloved artist-organizer Haydn.

A comparison of Haydn with technical virtuoso Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) reveals that not all good artists are fit to organize. Mozart was born and drilled to become the main attraction of Leopold Mozart's Musical Touring Circus. Young Mozart wrote his first composition at the age of five. When he was six, he went on his first tour and was received by Maria Theresa as the *wunderkind* of the day. Since Wolfgang's childish charm was a magnet for audiences, his family lost no time in capitalizing on it. In 1763, he set out on a tour that was to last for more than three years, and by the time he was nine he had performed for royalties in England and France. Two years later, he composed his song plays, which today would be called musicals, and these were soon to be followed by both opera *seria*-serious and *buffa*-humorous.

Mozart spent most of his youth on tour, and, when he did return home to his native Salzburg, he almost immediately had to begin another project. Due to the low pay for steady positions as Konzertmeister or Hoforganist, he could not afford to stay in Salzburg for long.

Whether Mozart found himself in Munich, Mannheim, Vienna, or Berlin, he tried hard to obtain a dependable inside position similar to the one old Papa Haydn had. In his youth, he had traveled to get rich and, as he grew older, poverty pushed him out onto the roads. Not even in Vienna did he find peace. One can trace almost 20 addresses among which he constantly had to move his poor little family and his old tattered pianoforte. His nomadic life as an outsider was more of necessity than by intention, and his early death in 1791 was probably due in part to the physical hardship he had had to endure beginning at the time of his youthful tours as a *wunderkind*. Even though Mozart died a famous composer, his honor and fame came from his reputation as an exceptionally gifted and technically brilliant craftsman, not from his success as an artist-organizer. The fact that no organization found it worthwhile to keep him on its tenured payroll supports this conclusion.

Let us now turn to another artist icon, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), in order to get an even better understanding of the artist-organizer. On Beethoven's second visit to Vienna in 1792, Haydn accepted him as a pupil, and their teacher–student relationship seems to have been the principal thing they had in common. Haydn, for example, gladly spent 28 years in the loyal service of his Prince, but, when Prince Karl Lichnovsky, also a good friend and admirer of the late Mozart, paid Beethoven 600 gulden to enter his service in 1800, this Prince was up against an entirely different temperament. Beethoven responded to his position by whining, 'Now I have to be home at half past three to shave and put on something better; can't stand it!' (Geck 2001: 28). At that time Beethoven was much hailed as a piano virtuoso and composer, but, in the words of Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832), he was also known for his heroic 'Napoleonic' stubbornly uncompromising personality. When Beethoven approached the managers at Breitkopf & Härtel to get a lifelong exclusive contract similar to the one 'Goethe has ... with Cotta' and 'Händel had with his London publisher' (Geck 2001: 47), he received the harsh reply that, as far as the impresario knew, Beethoven was neither a Goethe nor a Händel.

This rejection made Beethoven even more determined to obtain support as an independent artist, and, after ten years of persistent effort, he finally did it. His success came when his three most influential Viennese patrons – Archduke Rudolph and the two Princes Lobkowitz and Kinsky – by written contract granted him an annual lifelong rent of 4,000 gulden. In addition to this, Beethoven continually earned money on the side, not only selling his compositions but also capitalizing on his popularity by peddling dedications for his compositions to Viennese nobility. Beethoven was not an artist lending his audio-visual organizational skills to an organization, however; he was an entrepreneur hedging market risk through a fixed income from rich donors. He also incorporated the idea of the 'genius' with a divine mystical gift that accounts for his qualitative jump from brilliant technique to sublime art. Even though the stubborn struggle for independence makes it difficult for a genius to serve an organization, the rise of a new kind of German philosophy during this period fostered a new look at artists and art from an organizational point of view.

Aesthetics of the state: seeing the value of art and artists to organizing

Around the time of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, a branch of German philosophy began to reflect on the roles of art in society. A figure central in this development of German

aesthetics was poet and philosopher Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Goethe actually lived through and took an active part in the formational period of German aesthetic philosophy, and, in addition, he knew personally the trio of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Goethe believed that the acknowledgment of the power of art was closely connected to philosophical reflection. To Goethe, Haydn's creation of his string quartet was stimulating as a philosophical discussion 'because you hear four reasonable men converse, [and] get both the impression of grasping their discussion and becoming familiar with the special character of each participating instrument' (Knispel 2003: 90).

In Frankfurt am Main, Goethe had once noticed 'the little man in wig and dagger' (Hennenberg 1992: 14), alias *wunderkind* Mozart, on his first tour. Goethe had no problem with the art of Haydn and Mozart, but he became seriously concerned when clarity and playful beauty were overshadowed by introverted rebellion in the work of Beethoven. Goethe once remarked that Beethoven's *Fifth* was 'grandiose, though completely insane' (Salomon 2003: 285). The composer actually met Goethe several times and wrote several pieces inspired by Goethe's writing. Goethe was an elegant and witty celebrity, but he had difficulty comprehending the uncompromising artist. Beethoven had once revolted Goethe by childishly urging him, an innate aristocratic gentleman, to ignore the Czar in an idiotic attempt to make the ruler of Russia salute Beethoven before Beethoven greeted the monarch. Regardless of this, Goethe accepted most of Beethoven's whimsy and even played the game of spelling his name 'von Beethoven' even though his 'van' clearly signaled that he was, in fact, a 'bourgeois gentilhomme.'

Beethoven admired Goethe immensely and also held Goethe's protégé poet Georg Friedrich Schiller in high regard. Schiller's poetry survives today primarily in the lyrics of Beethoven's *Ninth*. In 1795, Schiller recorded some of his reflections in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Schiller 1982), as he investigated how Immanuel Kant's third critique could be used as a theory for how art and artists could help organizing an 'aesthetic state' (Chytry 1989). Had Schiller published his 'aesthetics' it would have undoubtedly provided Goethe with the philosophical frame needed to completely acknowledge the organizational and constructive function of even a too wild genius like Ludwig van Beethoven. In Schiller's rendering of Kant, it makes aesthetic sense that Beethoven cut himself loose from much of the musical tradition of his time by inventing a third form of music somewhere between noble opera and religious oratorio. The fact that Beethoven emphasized the independent character of his music and branded it 'absolute' art is equally understandable in light of Schiller's aesthetic theory.

Schiller's organizing aesthetics defined art as the modern expression of our innate drive for play. *Play*, in turn, is a third kind of absolute force that balances two other innate drives for *form* and *matter*. Without this balance, individuals run the constant risk of getting hooked on either form, defined as our love of logical thinking, or matter, our lust for physical pleasure. When form or matter rules, human organization turns dogmatic or materialistic. Only play is able to keep a check on these forces. According to Schiller, artists are the guides to play and the guardians of playfulness, and he maintains therefore that artists are the true organizers of a good society. By upholding playfulness as a third constructive power controlling the two destructive powers of form and matter, art can save us. When this belief becomes influential, which was the case during the nineteenth century in the German-speaking world, art and artists turn good candidates toward leading societal positions.

In 1830, when Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809–1847) visited old Goethe in Weimar, this aesthetic philosophy had flourished for more than 30 years. From the time Mendelssohn first spent some time in Weimar at the age of 12, Goethe had admired his way of doing art, first

asking him to ‘make some noise’ (Rolland 2011 [1864]: 7) at the pianoforte. Goethe then sallied forth into a philosophical conversation about the role of art and disclosed that ‘you the young have all made such progress in art; so now you have to explain it all to me; for I am no longer informed ... we really have to talk reasonably’ (ibid.: 6–7).

Goethe’s specific interest, however, was hearing about the philosophy of Hegel, and Felix Mendelssohn was a reasonable person to explain Hegel’s ideas, for the great Prussian state philosopher was a frequent guest in the house of Mendelssohn’s father, a famous Berlin banker. Hegel enjoyed both concerts and philosophical conversations; to him, art might be politically significant because philosophical aesthetics could explain art’s role in helping to unify scattered German states under Prussian rule. Hegel saw to an even greater extent than Kant did that art was an important pillar for a perfect modern state. Here was a new philosophical system that gave leading roles to art and artists, and even Prussian elites read aesthetics as a theory for organizing the new state. Hegel provided artists with an amazing expansion of Schiller’s theory and made them key organizers of the evolving bourgeois state.

The Mendelssohn family *métier* was deeply conditioned by organizational aesthetics. Felix Mendelssohn was nothing but the offspring of humble craftsmen, but his music making had a philosophical grounding that led to his getting a central position in the state. He ran the famous Leipzig Gewandhaus concert house and managed its orchestra. In addition, he was an important state bureaucrat who administered the first public conservatory for state-supported music education. It was no coincidence that Felix was the grandson of Kant’s friend the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. German idealism and its aesthetic philosophy paved the way for how new art institutions operated. This new aesthetic state granted powerful inside positions to those that rank and faith had made outsiders before. The Hegelian positioning of art at the core of a new idealistic state made it possible to dispose of church as well as court without jumping into a market system void of any institutional protection for art and artists.

Today, two centuries later, the differences in cultural policies between English- and German-speaking Europe can probably be accounted for by the same Hegelianism that made it possible for art and artists to be counted as state insiders, protected and in charge of a new kind of cultural institution. Son of a wealthy banker and a recent convert to Christianity, grandson of a philosopher who secretly learned the German language to escape from an outsider position in a ghetto sealed off by orthodox Jewish rabbis, Mendelssohn had orchestrated his career as artist-organizer perfectly in tune with dominant organizing aesthetics. Hegel welcomed artists that made art in the spirit of Schiller. Arthur Schopenhauer hailed even further the artists’ claim to the throne of the new philosopher king. It was no coincidence that Hitler was devoted to Richard Wagner who retained his own private philosopher-coach or that Friedrich Nietzsche, as long as he was publicly acknowledged as the new Dionysus, turned opera into an audio-visual scenario for an aesthetic state. This became the Nazi scenario to the extent that Hitler considered Wagner his ‘religion’ and in the 1930s considered marrying Winifred Wagner, widow of Richard’s son. Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy strolled up the same broad road of organizing aesthetics as all the Riefenstahls and Eisensteins had. In the middle of the nineteenth century, he spelled out the constitutional duty of an artist-organizer to develop audio-visual strategies since

we have to acknowledge that there exists no art of the same high standards as our German art ... no other people is able to understand art as we although I cannot explain why that is so ... In music a work of art of that stature (as Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell* [*my example*]) is still lacking, and music still needs one day to bring forth a work of that similar perfection.

(Rolland 2011 [1864]: 248–249)

The artful market: designing products as pieces of art

Marketing aesthetics

The rise of German bourgeois art and its organizing aesthetics is a prelude to contemporary ‘cultural policy.’ From the German aesthetic philosophy of Immanuel Kant forward, it was directly conceived as a theory for organizing a public sphere. Artists educated in art academies and conservatoires were primarily trained to make official public art in the service of an aesthetic state. Meanwhile, other parts of Europe like Britain and France saw the birth of a different aesthetics with a focus on visual strategies. While state aesthetics concentrated on the public sphere, a new marketing aesthetics contended that art and artists have an important role to play in private markets.

During successful tours in England, both Haydn and Mendelssohn experienced early ‘marketing aesthetics.’ They found musical life in England fundamentally different from their publicly embedded careers on the continent. In Haydn’s case, in addition to shaping audio-visual strategy for the House of Esterhazy, he had freelanced in ‘academies’ of the Vienna Palais and the court theatres. In England, and to some extent in France, a third type of venue had opened up in public chambers between church and court, and this was a market for performances open to a paying audience. On the British Isles, Haydn’s music was presented in venues such as the Hanover Square Rooms, and music lovers of the thriving bourgeoisie began to unite in consumer associations. Professional concerts were supplied in this new commercial market where artists supplied pieces of art as products in a marketplace. Single products were designed so that they naturally fit the artist’s signature.

At the same time, art and artists became central to the making of markets for manufactured products. Adam Smith, the moral philosopher of modern markets, provided an account of art-based visual strategies of the market in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The book, published in 1759, sets in place the philosophical footing for his treatise on *The Wealth of Nations* published in 1776. He provides an aesthetic explanation for the demand for the luxury products we are attracted to:

We are ... charmed with the beauty of that accommodation which reigns in the palaces and economy of the great; and admire how every thing is adapted to promote their ease, to prevent their wants, to gratify their wishes, and to amuse and entertain their most frivolous desires.

(Smith 1979: 183)

Smith declared ‘the eye to be larger than the belly,’ pointing out that what drives the ‘wealth of nations’ is the visual. Our physical needs or the practical usefulness of what we demand is secondary. He laid the foundations for a marketing aesthetics that pinpointed the ‘something’ that made the manufacturers and workshops do business by ‘charm’ and ‘beauty.’ Moreover, Smith believed that what spurred demand for private goods was connected to what determined preferences in the public sphere. For what determines both private and public choices, in political states as well as in commercial marketplaces, is our visually triggered attraction to beautiful organization or in Smith’s words:

the same principle, the same love of system, the same regard to the beauty of order, of art and contrivance, [that] frequently serves to recommend those institutions which tend to promote public welfare ... They make up part of the great system of government,

and the wheels of political machines seem to move with more harmony and ease by means of them.

(*ibid.*: 185)

German state aesthetics differ from the Scottish aesthetics of marketing, however. The contention that the desire for beauty and charm motivates the modern consumer as well as the modern citizen makes an aesthetics of the 'pleasure principle.' Smith's reason for including art and artists as visual marketers is, therefore, somewhat distant from Kant's or Schiller's aesthetic theories. Smith offers a different, and also potentially conflicting, rationale for making art and artists shape visual strategies. Kant (1991) was adamant that aesthetics aimed at making judgment about higher truths, and Schiller dubbed the artist an organizer responsible for stopping formalism and materialism in the ideal state. Kant felt that Smith's Scottish friend and inspiration David Hume diminished the role of higher ideals in human action when he focused on sense perception and factual experience in his empiricist philosophy. Hume's empiricism made us skeptical of the existence of any higher values. In addition, Smith saw all of society as a theatrical stage, a vanity fair, where actors showed off to each other and where no underlying values or honest intentions could ever be read into it with full certainty. In the world of Adam Smith, little room exists for enabling overwhelming enthusiasm to sweep away doubts and mobilize observers into spontaneous actors in the way organizing aesthetics interprets how visual happenings like a Wagner opera or an Eisenstein movie can affect masses.

Marketing aesthetics became a social science on the same plane as Newton's discovery of gravitation. Visually attractive actions and beautiful goods had the power to cluster people into groups and communities. This interest in social effects caused by using beauty and charm made modern 'marketing,' a term already used by Smith to provide psychological rationales for why art and artists are important. On the other hand, the more philosophically bent investigations stemming from state aesthetics led to more sociologically tainted rationales approaching societies and organizations as a whole as artworks *per se*. In matters of art and of artists, perception is always accompanied by philosophy; the German school, however, generally put the emphasis on philosophy while the Scots relied mostly on perception. Marketing aesthetics at the most hypothetical level assumes that the design of individual products connects and organizes them into brands in the mind of the consumer-spectator. In English marketplaces, buyers saw what they knew, while Prussian citizens rather knew what they saw.

Market as an art show for designed pieces

What was offered in the markets of early industrialization people often saw as art. It often even looked like a performing artist. Karl Marx, for example, pictured factory goods on the shop counter as performance-pantomime between a coat and a piece of cloth arguing their relative value as if on the stage of a commercial theatre. It was taken for granted that the commercial success of early industrial wares depended on colorful stage makeup, as in the case of the vividly printed fabrics that seduced buyers in the textile markets of the first monster mills. When the moral/market philosopher Smith explained how poor traders got their hands on primitive gold treasures from rich tribes, he took it for granted that glittering glass pearls, baubles, and trinkets would do the aesthetic trick. No wonder that nineteenth-century world exhibitions made no difference in exposing industrial hardware, blueprint software for better social organizations, as well as spectacular pieces of art by famous artists.

Smith's early lesson in visual marketing aesthetics was later interpreted by Karl Marx as how the appearance of wealth can be exchanged for what really is! Marx leaned heavily toward

the German focus on philosophy behind perception, and the Marxian interpretation indeed hinges on the Platonic idea of artists as visual tricksters who cunningly fool by projecting visual shadows on the walls of our caves. This Platonic idea of art fits naturalistic artists who depict the masterpieces of craftsmen. Flemish still-life art, which shows plates and cutlery on an exquisite tablecloth, was often actually an early version of commercial posters and ads visually representing value in real goods. In Plato, this is clear; he saw artists as providing illusions by mirroring only the values others produced, therefore deeming the visual worthless. In that Platonic perspective, artists were at the bottom of the value-making pyramid; they just mirrored objects produced by honest craftsmen according to the ideal blueprints of philosopher-designers. Smith's aesthetics in fact put artists making attractive visual impressions at the top of the commercial-value pyramid.

The advent of industrial mechanization, first in the mass manufacturing of products and then by industrial depiction of this visual reality in the form of photography and motion pictures, posed the problem of reinforcing the Platonic callout of artists as visual parasites on material production and formal philosophizing. Where Platonic philosophy prevailed – and it did gain considerably in importance through industrialization due mainly to its modernization in Marxian philosophy – the recognition of value in art depended on aesthetics that would explain it as something more than just visual mirrors of the real or ideal. The Marxian tried to escape the problem by postulating that modern states should be split up into a commercial and a cultural sector. But even that imaginary iron curtain has cracked due to the fact that industrial factory and services workers look more and more like art and artists. German aesthetics had tried to turn Plato's argument on its head by claiming that artists represented a third way that made the world tick smoothly, while philosophers of form and materialists would ruin it if left alone. This argument worked well where the elite often aspired to govern an 'aesthetic state' (Chytrý 1989) as a 'total work of art' (Groys 1992), but early industrialization took place elsewhere.

Artist marketers

England, the very cradle of industrialization, recognized other strategies like the 'Arts and Crafts' movement promoting the artist-artisan as paramount to the production process. Similarly, Austria's 'Werk-Bund' organization invited factory owners to look at old masterpieces that might be copied using new machinery, thereby reconnecting mass manufacturing to ancient craftsmanship. Much in the spirit of Smith's marketing aesthetics, early industrial design made art museums and art schools interact with industry. Nineteenth-century European art academies opened special programs for drawing patterns for textiles, like the 'flower class' in French silk-city Lyon. Much later, the same motivating force caused visual artists such as Andy Warhol and Michelangelo Pistoletto, each with a background in marketing and advertising, to team up as pop artists operating in a market where the overlap between commerce and culture was an empirical fact. Museums and art collections interacted with design and production in a spirit fostering young artists such as John Galliano, who scouted for new Dior collections mining the Victoria and Albert Museum. Small companies grew visually large brands by inviting artists to play in their factories and then, as artists, to sign limited edition products as Marcel Duchamp once jokingly had signed 'ready-mades.' This old tradition of melding manufacturing and art has recent successors in arty furniture companies such as the German Vitra, Swedish Källemo, Italian Alessi or Finnish Artek. Signature designers became visual experts for companies functioning as artists associated with galleries. In the French-speaking world, these new artists-marketers have the professional name of their 'createurs,' vaguely alluding to the old-time

art genius. This is how the Italian Alessi presents its product designers who are usually Italian architects who earned degrees from art academies and then opted to make small articles instead of big houses.

The marketing artist then does not 'do art' dictated by the market. He/she does not simply decorate or embellish by painting on boxes and advertisements instead of on canvas. While the organizing artist is good at maneuvering in a state and its bureaucracy, the marketing artist instead navigates in markets. This implies – and this is an important qualification – that marketing artists do not produce art *for* the market but *in* the market. Marketing artistry stands in sharp contrast to earlier artists living a double life as both breadwinners and artists. Salvador Dali (1904–1989) worked as a department store window dresser, Henri de Toulouse Lautrec (1864–1901) sold dance hall posters, and René Magritte (1898–1967) earned his living by way of his Studio Dongo advertising firm. They lived double lives making the commercial pay for the cultural.

For marketing artists such as American Andy Warhol (1928–1987) and German Joseph Beuys (1921–1981), there was no longer such a split. Warhol successfully fought his way out of his first profession as an advertising artist to begin making his art in close interplay with markets (e.g. Schroeder 2005). Instead of cloistering himself in a secluded studio, he founded a factory of his own as well as a glamorous commercial-looking magazine, declaring to the world that he wanted to become a real 'business artist' doing true 'business art.' His screen prints feature Campbell soup cans and Coke bottles that paradoxically offer individual portraits of mass wares. Beuys, the German friend of Warhol, focused his creative effort on 'enlarging' the concept of art, making it work far outside the world of fine arts. He launched his ideas through extremely efficient public event marketing accompanied by catchy ad slogans such as 'Art is Capital' and 'Everyone is an artist' and by defining doing art as 'Social Sculpture.'

Michelangelo Pistoletto (1933–), another prominent marketing artist, today focuses on managing his foundation and promoting experiments in 'socially responsible art' in cooperation with regions, corporations, and single firms. He locates visual experiments in art spaces and biennales, partly financing them through gallery sales of his own artwork; for example, his Illy projects are shown in the Venice Biennale. The commercial and the cultural are now fundamentally blurred. In the second part of the chapter, it will become clear that even the last three artists belong to the classical era.

Contemporary aesthetics strategies

Art and the real

A new contemporary aesthetics strategy still half-baked and still much in the making is evolving in a world where Western art is permeating globally. YouTube stores art classics of Riefenstahl, Haydn, and even Wagner opera. Shoppers know art they constantly see on the markets. Impressionist painting, the exquisite detail of early Salvador Dali drawings, and the color of Andy Warhol prints belong to contemporary folklore. Our visual experience is forged by the calligraphy of Apple, the baroque of Dolce & Gabbana, or the Schinkel neo-classicism of a banking palace. We have no problem integrating art history in our reading of everyday reality. When thus an organization studies lecturer displays art icons by Matisse, Picasso, and Dali to her students asking them, 'Where would you like to work; in Matisse, Picasso or Dali-organization?', they seem to have no problem interpreting what kind of atmospheres such masterpieces may convey. Media provide us today with aesthetics spectacles from very early on.

Most large cities invest in art fairs and hold biennales, so that the man on the street has an easy pathway to visual experience. The number of art students is increasing exponentially as new forms of art take advantage of new visual technologies. This, in turn, implies that visual art is being explained, interpreted, analyzed, and reflected upon by an equally growing global army of theorists, curators, and critics. It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Today, these words reappear in the art-connected publications and one may ask: which ones are not? We live in Societies of Spectacle (Debord 1995) entrenched in the postmodern conditions (Lyotard 1979) that make it unproblematic for even a child to discern the difference between a Fauvist or Cubist or Surrealist organization! Marcel Duchamp had in the neighborhood of 3.5 million Google hits as of early March 2012. Businesses are art firms, managers are artists, and museum and art galleries but bleak copies of markets and organizations (Guillet de Monthoux 2004). Managers pride themselves on doing 'business art' à la Candy-Andy and cool corporate communication artfully turns loss to profit and old hats to new caps by creative tricks many artists have derided in their work over the past two decades (e.g. Mir 2003). In short, there are plenty of reasons why those who want neither Guy Debord nor Jean Baudrillard (1994) to have the final say today should avoid classic aesthetics strategies. How then do contemporary aesthetics strategies attempt to invent new roles for art and artists in visual organizational strategies?

Inventing is actually an inappropriate term to use in context with contemporary aesthetics strategies; the movement is rather about discovering or finding. The classics, philosophers and artists united, were constantly looking for how to make the general or universal visible in the everyday. Contemporaries seem to imply that, when art and artists focus on making the universal visible, they unfortunately end up exposing idealistic clichés, which are increasingly removed from the truth Kant claimed aesthetic judgment could help detect. That said, contemporaries do not claim they can pull a correct idea out of some Marxist top hat nor do they want art or artists to present visuals with an alternative symbolism or from different imageries. One of their novel battles against the classics claims that art and artists will help organize a better world only when they make us see what is really out there. By seeing, they mean *observing* rather than just viewing. They see classics lost in a museum of images, visions, and ideals. To the contrary, contemporaries envision art museums that feature scientific observation of the world. The science they propose is one based on human beings and their concrete conditions.

The mega art show dOCUMENTA takes place every fifth year in Kassel, Germany. At dOCUMENTA 13, which ran from 9 June until the end of September 2012, the German-based artist Omer Fast presented a piece of video art critically exploring the narrative process demonstrated during the take reunion between a German soldier returning from Afghanistan and his middle-aged parents. The video records how, after being informed that their son had been killed in combat the couple takes an assortment of young men home with them as surrogate sons. What initially presents itself as a comment on a macro political event turns into a complex drama disclosing effluvia of human behavior, as single close-up micro events send the viewer far into the muck and mayhem of the subject. An overwhelming impression of dOCUMENTA 13, a show that traditionally offers a good sample of contemporary artwork in general, is that art and artists quite often resolve to zero in on the individual close up and personal. It seems to take very little effort to assume the opposite position of blowing up something from its singularity to a universal meta-level, as if the contribution of art and artist would be to critically check the real substance of the general by putting it to a singularity test. Does this exist or is it a myth, an ideal or an empty vision? Earlier such tests were performed by giving the artist the privilege to put herself, as a subject, on the scene of art. Contemporary aesthetics strategy, however, consciously avoids the subjective and opts for what is now labeled the 'singular.'

The focus is no longer on individual feelings or emotions but on the possibility to marinate something in a general form, a special unique content. This is what artists attempt, this is what art should offer, and this is how contemporary aesthetics strategy attempts to eliminate the post-modern mist polluting overexploitation of classic strategies.

Implicit in this new strategy is the desire to maintain but refine special art spaces. This new kind of art necessitates a special visual experiment, and the laboratory or observatory supporting such an investigation has to be organized carefully. Remember how art spaces and performance venues were designed as white cubes or black boxes to focus the attention – of eye and mind – on pieces of art. Such observatories could be single buildings or whole cities like the dOCUMENTA in Kassel, the Biennale of Venice, or the European cultural capitals. The visual strategy of putting us in the picture in a very physical sense seems highly efficient, for a large number of people go to art spaces. This tells us that the visibility of contemporary aesthetics strategies is a physical consideration. The art space works on us, or, in the words of artist Olafur Eliasson (1967–), museums are really ‘reality machines.’ Art is a return to intensively complete sense experiences beyond the audio-visual limitation and the isolated ideal daydream. In that vein, artists become reality coaches to facilitate this new strategy of embodied vision. How does one become an artist able to put this sort of visual strategy into action?

Artists as reality coaches

When we look at art schools nurturing a contemporary aesthetics strategy, we no longer see comfortable nests for hippy dreamers fueled by outmoded ‘alternative’ utopias of freedom or tolerance. Art schools today encourage students to get inside the real world and face its constraints and conflicts. Young artists need to get used to a mix of monastery and mob scene and develop the practical skills necessary to function in the challenging fusion in art worlds. Before they leave art school, students should role-play how they will react to collectors who want to put them under long-term contracts and decide for themselves to what extent it is worthwhile to follow all the whims of curators and gallerists. An artist today must always be able to negotiate position in practical situations where freedom is always relative and contingent.

The contemporary art student knows there are no theoretical shortcuts to developing visual strategies. They usually have to familiarize themselves with the real-world practices of managing and curating, and what older artists confidently delegated to other art-world specialists like gallerists and art dealers, the contemporary art student now must master and integrate into his skill set. Today’s young artists participate in and gain direct inside experience with the complex organizational exercises involved in the development of visual strategies and assessment of their impact on audiences and critics. Artists like Danish Olafur Eliasson and Chinese Ai Weiwei are deeply involved in constructing and delivering their complex installations, always keeping in mind the effect of these strategies on direct spectators and indirect media.

Gone are the days when fledgling art students shared a crowded common studio; in the past, it was only after years of study or upon graduation that students were told they had reached the top and were then able to move – usually alone – to a single isolated studio. The house shared by Eliasson and Weiwei in Berlin exhibits the reverse; here there are two masters in a well-organized space that allows many different specialists to cooperate productively in the quest not for new dreams but for rediscovering the reality lost to classical dreamers.

The workspace of the reality coach artist is a place for generating social knowledge that cannot be transferred by assigning ‘passwords’ to isolated artists. A reality coach acts as if the social capital that integrates art with society will be destroyed if it is managed as individual property. It is both produced and shared in a cooperative experience.

Relational aesthetics

The young contemporary artist actually has more in common with Haydn than with Picasso or Mozart. Eccentricity verging on egocentricity resonates with the old artist myth but has no place in a contemporary art school fostering reality coaches fit to help develop visual strategies. What turns the contemporary artist into a potentially good reality coach is a preoccupation with experience and its meaning. Respect for this kind of practical knowledge can only emerge if it is liberated from the model of knowledge as information to single individuals. It rests on acknowledging the embodiment of vision and the importance of sensual knowledge (Bourriaud 2002). The implication, of course, is that learning in social interaction is the right way to grasp aesthetics.

The reality coach artist constructs shows, makes installations, and arranges performances and stage encounters where vision is continuously interwoven with interpretation, and the visual is continuously mixed with the intellectual. What Beuys prophetically alluded to as ‘social sculpture’ found its philosophical articulation nearly half a century later in Nicolas Bourriaud’s ‘relational aesthetics.’ Bourriaud is not a philosopher; he is a Parisian critic–curator who found it important to articulate the ideas of the artists he has exhibited. The same goes for the aesthetic investigation of Boris Groys who has elaborated a theory to show that novelty in contemporary art is a matter of transferring objects from the index of general archives to those of art institutions (Groys 2007). It is in close cooperation with installation artist Iliya Kabakov that Groys has developed his arts practice-based aesthetics (Groys 1996).

These are but two of the many cases illustrating the new way of doing aesthetics. Some would say this new way got off the ground when philosopher Arthur Danto began reflecting on the work of Warhol he had encountered in some New York gallery half a century earlier (Danto 1999). While Kant and Smith wrote for philosophers, the readers of this new kind of aesthetics are mainly artists in search of intellectual reflections on their own practice. This aesthetics also gets published and read in art magazines, and museum bookstores now disperse this type of aesthetics globally. In contrast to state and marketing aesthetics of the classical strategy, evidently it is also global simply because it follows visual art on tour as its intellectual catalogue companion.

Relational aesthetics is perfectly in tune with Mayor Bloomberg’s commissioning Olafur Eliasson to create an eye-catching New York Waterfalls installation in 2008.³ It could easily defend the choice of Ai Weiwei as the designer of the Beijing Olympic Stadium in 2007. Relational aesthetics delivers explanations why art is able to open our eyes to reality. Bourriaud further claimed that art has the relational power to make people meet and interact. Instead of engaging the service of an advertising firm to make a social impact, people should involve the artist in their visual strategies. Groys described the almost erotic sensitivity of installation artists and pointed out how they might touch us with their art in much more sensitive ways than any event-manager would be able to. Note how Danto minted an aesthetic term for how something like Duchamp’s ready-made bottle rack suddenly perceived as a piece of art undergoes a ‘transfiguration of the commonplace’ (Danto 1981). Blinded by our grand visions and dreams, we tend to disregard our observation of visual art in the form of the real.

Summary: art, artist, and aesthetics for organizational visual strategies

Some art and artists practicing visual organization strategy operate consciously, while others spin off it to their main concern. We have seen how what was called the classic approach has been taken over by a number of communication professionals using, or maybe abusing,

art as the main raw material of postmodern productions. We have also discovered the contemporary aesthetics strategist, who helps organize but does it differently than those who stage aesthetic promotions of nation states or big corporations or transform products into designer wares in markets. The contemporaries are a bit tired of the classics' focus on the general and universal ideals. They are not convinced that their own subjectivity can make them escape the dream world of a society of spectacles.

Instead, the contemporaries go for the singular and try to frame art as snapshots of reality that can perhaps capture cracks in the media wall of myths. They see no difference between art and society and hate having double careers as media gurus and art stars. They are like Swedish filmmaker Roy Andersson⁴ who gladly collects golden eggs, the prizes awarded for making commercial movies promoting insurance firms, political parties, and business firms, in the same basket as golden palms, the prizes awarded at the Cannes film festival.

While classics tend to think they can offer us dreams and visions, the contemporaries are after reality. This strangely echoes the art epoch in which realists such as French painter Courbet and writer Zola teamed up with positivist scientists to expose nature true and unmasked. Maybe the contemporaries are our new positivists, and maybe our so-called classics masquerade as romantics.

Finally, the chapter has attempted to explain that art and artists depend on aesthetics. In order to have practical effectiveness, the visual strategies we employ must be viewed through the glasses of aesthetics. If we forget aesthetics, we miss the whole point of connecting art and artists to such strategizing. Put bluntly, Stalin would never have paid Eisenstein, Alessi would never have hired either Mendini or Sottsass, and Bloomberg would never have given a thought to having Olafur Eliasson add to the image of New York. Aesthetics translates and clearly articulates this creed into words and, in addition, supports art-loving spectators with intellectually convincing philosophical arguments. While there may be artists without art, there is not art without aesthetics. This goes for visual strategizing too.

Notes

- 1 A sample can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TI6ylo-tcc>.
- 2 Available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIvaBOxHDj0&skipconrinter=1>.
- 3 Olafur Eliasson's Waterfalls, New York, available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7H-m5K06eM>.
- 4 <http://www.royandersson.com/>

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