Artists and Entrepreneurs:
a new relationship

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Introduction

The following anecdote is told of Picasso. One day he was sitting at table in a restaurant. A woman came up to him and handed him a napkin, asking him to draw something on it. Picasso did so in less than thirty seconds, and said 'Voilà, that will be 10,000 dollars.' The woman exclaimed, '10,000 dollars? For a drawing that took less than thirty seconds?' To which Picasso replied, 'Yes, but it took me forty years to get where I am now.'

Behind this little story, apocryphal or not, lurk the notions of both economy and art, both market and creativity, both demand and supply. This leads us into the subject at hand. The relationship between art and the economy has been the object of keen interest for some time now, not least among entrepreneurs. For 'creativity' has become a buzzword in business circles: creativity and innovation are essential conditions for survival.

A Belgian group of entrepreneurs, in collaboration with the non-profit organisation Arteconomy, ran a series of eight seminars held between February 2004 and June 2005 on the topic 'Art and the economy: we see no difference'. The goal was to reflect in a systematic fashion on the relationship between art and the economy, seen as a win-win relationship that reinforces both spheres without trespassing on the distinctiveness of either. The seminars were introduced by eight renowned speakers, each of whom approached the subject from a different perspective.

The starting point was this: both the entrepreneur and the artist have their own capital. In the case of the entrepreneur this consists of money, which can be used to finance supplies, the means of production, etc. For the artist, the capital is his or her freedom: the freedom to think, to choose the preferred form of expression.

Nevertheless, there are commonalities between them. Entrepreneurship is more than just production, buying, selling and making profit; it is a part of society as well. A good entrepreneur has a role and a responsibility in society, and looks for meaning in what he or she does. It is in this quest that the artist can be of assistance: for the artist creates a new language, new symbols that give meaning and interpretation to daily events. The entrepreneur can turn to the artist for inspiration and can make a commitment to supporting the arts.

The artist, in turn, can receive inspiration from the entrepreneur when it comes to exhibiting his or her works to society. This involves not purely a commercial transaction (such as the sale of a work of art) but also has to do with communication, strategy, efficiency and cooperation with others.

To be absolutely clear: the seminars did not seek a narrow definition of the terms 'art' and 'the economy'. Art is more than the 'fine arts', although this does not mean it is simply synonymous with culture or lifestyle. The economy, too, is more than profit-making. It has to do with collaboration, with building a better and more efficient society.

The seminars gave rise to a whole series of questions, answers and observations that made it clear that the statement 'Art and the economy: we see no difference' was something of an oversimplification. The relationship between art and the economy is

much more complex, nuanced and even polemical than one might think.

By means of the material provided in the eight seminars, along with some additional items, this book seeks to shed some light on that complex process. The complexity of the subject was immediately evident from the titles of the seminars, with questions or statements such as:

'Can creative talent be managed? Finding a balance between freedom and control.' With an introduction by Erik Temmerman, director of the 'Vooruit' arts centre in Ghent.

'Artists and entrepreneurs are in it only for the money.' With an introduction by Marc Jacobs, an ethnologist with a doctorate in art history.

'The art business is just as well-oiled (and polluting) as the production business.' With an introduction by Ritsaert ten Cate, a Dutch theatre producer and founder of the Mickery theatre company in Amsterdam.

'Art in harmony with business objectives.' With an introduction by artist Joëlle Tuerlinckx. Visit to the Lhoist Group's corporate art collection.

'The world market pays the piper and calls the tune'. With an introduction by Lex ter Braak, director of the Foundation for Fine Arts, Design and Architecture in Amsterdam.

'Art and the economy have no pure criteria for success.' With an introduction by artist Luc Tuymans.

'The taboo of failure.' With an introduction by the philosopher and theologian Marc De Kesel.

'An artist can/may/must question society and therefore the economy as well.' With an introduction by the philosopher Bart Verschaffel.

Art and the economy are related in several different ways, ranging from the harmonious to the conflictual, as the eight seminars revealed. Each event addressed a specific topic, although there was occasionally a degree of overlap among them. In the end, five distinct relationships between art and the economy were identified.

1. Art and the economy can **attract and repel** each other like magnets. The economy posits regular patterns, while art demands artistic freedom. However, the economy also benefits from freedom, while art, too, has its boundaries.

2. Art and the economy appear to be related to each other as a **younger to an older brother**. The economy is a big, powerful world player, essential for providing human beings with food, clothing, housing, etc. Art is 'only' for the spirit, for intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment. Nevertheless, it appears that the spiritual is also a necessity of life, and the younger sometimes has it over the older brother.

3. Art and the economy can be true **antagonists.** The economy has different priorities and goals from those of art, and sometimes they get in each other's way.

4. Art and the economy **shake hands**, whether or not this involves making compromises. Art and the economy can 'work together', in the sense that the artist and the entrepreneur each do their own thing. But art and the economy can also 'collaborate' on a common project.

5. Art and the economy are simply **parts of a greater whole** that is more than the sum of the two parts. Each plays its respective roles, in interaction and sometimes through an agreement with other players such as the market, public opinion, the community.

These five relationships between art and the economy make up the five chapters of this book. Between each chapter is an 'entracte', or interlude, written by entrepreneurs who participated in the seminars. They do not necessarily refer to the preceding chapter, but there is some connection between them, sometimes as a confirmation, at other times as refutation.

The first entracte is written by Francis De Beir, a businessman and the chair of the seminar series. The piece is a highly personalised introduction to what is to come. It reveals the essential advantages as well as the sticking points in the subtle, complex interaction between art and the economy.

Entracte 1
Art: an interest, a passion, a necessity

Individual responsibility

Everything we do has an impact on society. Without each one of us – that applies to every individual – the world would be a different place. The world and society are constantly changing and all of us with them. Not only do we have a place in the world and in society, we also have a responsibility.

I would resolutely defend the position that people in the economic world do not have a job, but a responsibility. I no longer ask people whom I meet: 'What do you do?' but rather, 'What is your responsibility?' The question implies my appreciation for what my interlocutor is, for how he 'registers' himself in society.

The individual who is aware of this responsibility may call himself a 'seeker'. He poses questions that probe deeper than merely the material level. This awakening of conscience is paired with the metaphysical question regarding the meaning of life, of our own lives. The question is: 'What am I doing here and what purpose does it serve?'

At this point, art appears on the horizon to offer sense and meaning. The artist creates symbols, a new language that calls attention to and clarifies, or gives meaning to what is going on around him. The individual, as *homo universalis*, who asks questions about life, encounters art. Why? Every person has a sense of spirituality. We feel that there is something that goes above and beyond our com-

prehension. Experiences like love, hatred, goodness, beauty, evil, friendship, freedom, creation, and the sense of belonging to a larger whole... Our reason cannot make sense of it. To grapple with these questions, to learn to live with the incomprehensible and the transcendental, we need religion, philosophy and art.

Individual creativity

The individual is a citizen who produces a product or service with his capital and his colleagues and sells that product or service to society, the consumer. In order to direct the process, the individual has to solve numerous problems, major and minor. He has to be creative if he wants to find and implement the best solutions.

Artists have the potential to be wonderful consultants. An artist can look at problems from a fresh perspective and bring new solutions. He can help to implement a creative approach to problems in society and in our lives, by formulating answers in innovative ways. The artist also makes a product, artwork, which he offers to the observer as a way of seeing.

The two worlds of art and the economy can influence each other if we recognise that everything we do extends beyond a mere struggle for survival and making a profit, if we are aware that our activity influences and changes the environment, and therefore we bear responsibility for our actions.

The question, 'who is entitled to create art?' is important. An artist is apparently one who calls himself an artist, in other words, one who creates art. But here too, responsibility plays a role: if the artist envisions himself in that capacity in society, then it is his duty and obligation to interpret our world to the best of his abilities. This world is the world of feelings, insights, fears and joys, the

subconscious, the abstract, the untranslatable. An artist encourages reflection; art can help solve problems, it detects trends and provides direction.

It is not because you are inventive and full of inspiration that you are an artist. An artist has a language and a story. He has something to say and how he says it is a question of professional knowledge and skill, as is the case with an entrepreneur.

An artist is a critical observer of the chaos and the harmony in the world. On the one hand he can point out and establish that harmony, in which case we are usually talking about the 'fine arts'. But there is also the continual tension among all the players in society – a hallmark of chaos and disharmony – that leads to compromises in working toward harmony. The reward for many artists is to see the tension, to point it out and to suggest solutions. Considering that its subject matter is tension and distortion, this art will not always be 'beautiful' and 'harmonious'.

A fragile balance of power

Art is a human product. As soon as it leaves the hands of the artist, anything can happen to it. Art may turn up in different worlds, one of which is the world of the economy, the market.

Approaching art with money as a vehicle is too limiting. Money can never be the goal of artistic production. The economy, moreover, is more than money and the flow of capital.

Art is not about power. At most, art can identify power as the societal element it chooses to discuss. If the artist makes compromises he is no longer just dealing with art. This explains the paucity of true artists; it is difficult to remain pure. We have to admit

that the ideal world is a theoretical model and that compromises are inevitable.

Ultimately, the artist directs himself at the spectator, the people. But in society, within the system, a misunderstanding has become entrenched over centuries, namely, that art is made possible and is promoted by people who have the money to do so. The individual taxpayer's money goes to the state, but the state does not adequately take on the task of supporting the arts. Consequently, it is almost inevitable that the economic world, the world in which capital is generated, assumes responsibility – with the danger that an unequal balance of power comes to exist between art and the economy.

The true artist sees the peril of becoming dependent on the economic system. The risk is that if he wishes to maintain his independence, he may remain unknown for years or even for the rest of his life. But the artist has to have a life, has to support his family and fulfil his civic duties. He has as much of a right as others do to participate in an economic and social life. Thus he must constantly be on guard to maintain a distinction between the world of art and the world of the economy. This is possible only if the entrepreneur/art consumer is willing to take on the responsibility of preserving the artist's independence. That should be the commitment the economy makes to make to art.

Historically, the Church was the mediator between art and the economy. Today, art and the economy stand side by side, more than they ever have before. The danger is actually that confusion may arise between them, a chaotic fusion of art, culture and the economy. Even worse, art blends more and more into everyday life.

The artist sees himself increasingly confronted in his work with such concepts as marketing, communication and bookkeeping. Yet he needs time and space and the opportunity for reflection.

A common purpose

In my view, the duty of the entrepreneur is to make the world a better place, and this common goal is also one for which the artist should strive. There are, however, many impediments.

We cannot deny the increasing presence of aggression and violence in the world today. War is not the ideal means by which to improve the world. If all the funding for war and violence were directed to training and education, the world would look very different two generations hence.

Aggression has many offspring. Within the large movement of globalisation there is a growing trend toward erasing the individual. You see it in the 'McDonaldising' of culture: books that everyone has to read, films that everyone has to see, the car that we must all own, the amusement parks that we must all visit. Consumerism aims to bring about a one-dimensional experience: the experience of the ego, of the here and now. This narcissistic self-experience has become more important than paying attention to and taking care of others. Paradoxically, consumerism supplants, as a motor for globalisation, the singularity of the individual, although it focuses on the ego.

The anti-globalisation movement that has arisen as a reaction has another consequence that leads to aggression: fear. This is the terror about the loss of oneself as an individual and as a group, fear for the loss of social and historical individuality. This fear leads to a consuming desire to put ourselves at the centre of the world. A

delusion, of course: you cannot define the self by shutting it up in the nuclear family, culture, villages, cities, or personal history... You can only define the self by interacting with others. Travelling the world while evaluating oneself and comparing, by exploring boundaries with the outside world.

On the local level, everything has a name. On the global level, however, much is unknown. The questions and answers lie beyond the borders of our knowledge. Every advancement, every new achievement can only be the consequence of a courageous step into the unknown.

Conclusion: new exploration

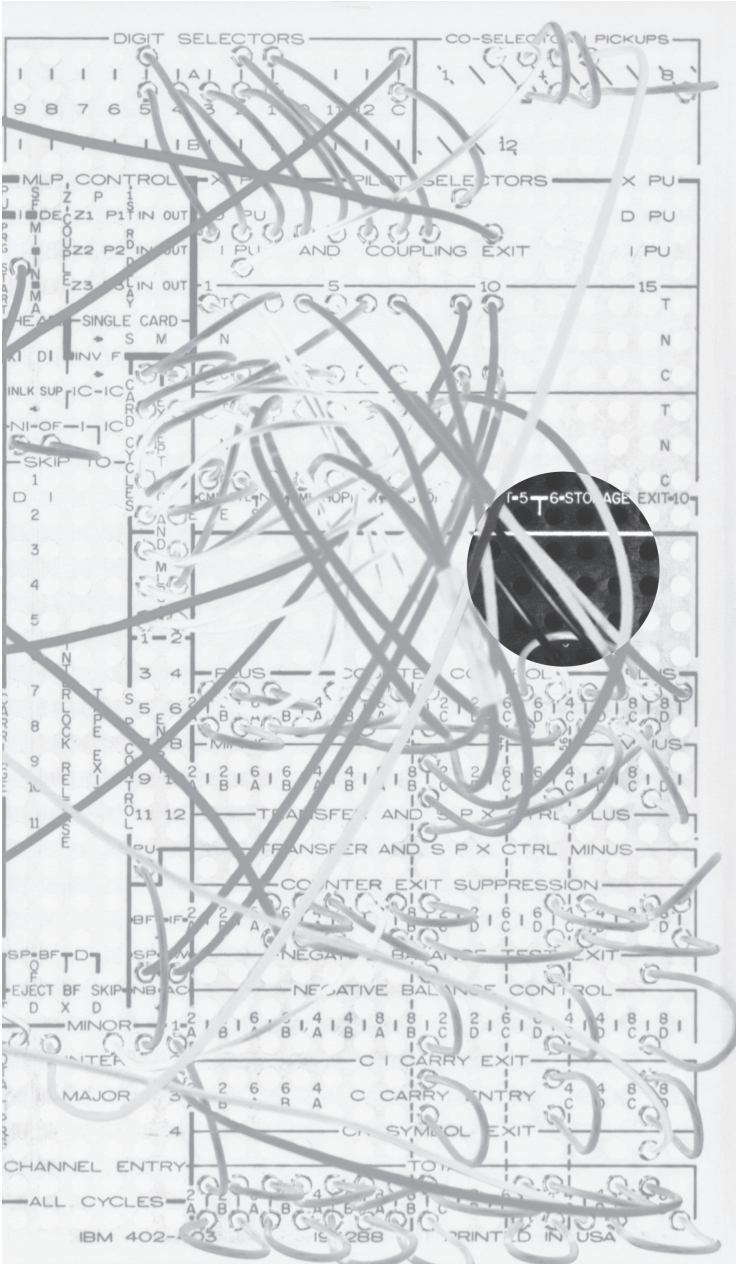
Both the entrepreneur and the artist seek to break open established reality. But while the entrepreneur does not enter into discussion regarding boundaries and limits, but looks only for ways to maximise them, the artist is actively investigating boundaries and limits in order to create a new space.

Our ethical and aesthetic exploration of the world, the search for what is good and pure, just and beautiful, is sharpened through the artistic experience. As you are captivated by a passion for art, art becomes a part of you, of your entire life. With our heightened sensitivity we are not satisfied with a purely materialistic approach to society. We know that there is more. The world has suddenly become a bigger place.

Francis De Beir
chair of the seminar 'Art and the economy: we see no difference'

CHAPTER I

ART AND THE ECONOMY CAN ATTRACT AND REPEL EACH OTHER LIKE MAGNETS



The artist creates a work of art and the entrepreneur creates a product. The artist can sell his artwork, but that is not essential because it is the artist's message that dominates. If necessary, artists can find income elsewhere: their partner may provide an income, they may teach at an academy, or the state may offer a little support, etc.

The entrepreneur who does not manage to sell his product fails and goes bankrupt. Generally speaking there are no subsidies for a superfluous economic product. And a partner who is responsible for providing income is tolerated only in the start-up phase.

Artists and entrepreneurs thus have little in common.

But is that really so? Most art collectors are entrepreneurs, not only because they have the financial means, but because they see something in art. First, they find in art something they feel is lacking in their entrepreneurship, and then they discover what art can add and how it can be used. The charms of artistic freedom, the attraction of the unpredictable and the strength of originality are all appealing.

The artist, on the other hand, is fascinated by the entrepreneur. The entrepreneur takes risks. He does not tread the well-worn path, but looks for new challenges, paving a long and often difficult road to what can be compared to a work of art: a product. The entrepreneur has the advantage of organisational talent, the ability to build a structure, to make crucial decisions.

There is something that binds them: a mutual attraction as well as a mutual doubt – 'art' versus 'money'. And something more: the chance to succeed or to fail.

In previous centuries the economy developed in a remarkable manner. You would expect the economy to have as its primary objective the fulfilment of man's basic material needs, such as food, clothing and shelter. But over time, that responsibility has become incidental and there has been a shift: desire is now a central focus. People need to have constant desires and they want to see those desires confirmed. Consequently, the economy creates a demand for demands. The economy must always tempt people, creating new desires and demands. This game our society plays is made visible in media advertisements and in the marketplace. The economy cannot go too far, however, because the consumer will see through and dismiss any seductive technique that is too drastic or aggressive. At the same time the consumer does not wish the seduction game to end because it offers perspective. The economy and the consumer attract and repel each other like magnets.

Art has also undergone a noteworthy evolution. In the Western Christian world, art was for centuries in the service of the image of God and his glorification. But as the Christian worldview gradually began to crumble, from the inception of modernity, art faced various challenges. With the Enlightenment and the rise of science, a new culture came into being, one in which art was merely an aesthetic supplement. Art became the 'fine arts'. It became increasingly difficult for art to be entirely 'realistic'; it had to find a new *raison d'être*. Modern art identifies itself as an ongoing conflict: either it seeks a new form of realism or it departs radically from it, and ponders its own processes and its relationship with the consumer. The art lover, by contrast, looks at art, desiring it to create legitimacy for itself, while at the same time expecting it to

seduce him. Thus art and the consumer also interact in the way that magnets do.

Failure

According to philosopher and theologian Marc De Kesel, art and the economy find common ground in 'failure'.

'The economy is based on failure; it is in no position to offer what it promises and it makes us rush around endlessly, chasing others as well as ourselves. The economy does not even allow us to be the free individuals we like to imagine we are – a freedom we hope the economy will help us to achieve. The genius of our economy is really based on taking this failure and giving it such a twist that it becomes the motor of its own success. This generally works only when all that is repressed, negated and denied. If we, who are caught in the economy's grip, wish to gain a certain freedom from the economy, we must consciously position ourselves at its failures. Art can help us reach this place, because art can bring into focus and thus expose the denial that is characteristic of the economy. This can only be achieved, however, when art in turn confronts the economy with its own failures.'

(Marc De Kesel, at the seminar on 'The taboo of failure')

The fact that some twenty-five entrepreneurs were willing to take the time to attend eight seminars dealing with the relationship between art and the economy illustrates the power of attraction between the two. An entrepreneur and an artist have much to discuss, each from his own position. Take for example the concepts of 'economic order' and 'structure' on one hand, and 'artistic freedom' on the other. How do they influence each other in a creative

process that occurs within a business, a process that is focussed on working as efficiently as possible while at the same time delivering the newest possible products? How does this mutual interaction in a sometimes rigid production process work out for an artist ...while at the same time impeding artistic freedom as little as possible?

Pitfalls and structured chaos

Apparently there is such a thing as a 'chaos trap'. A business or an organisation can collapse because it lacks structure. If entrepreneurs and their employees enjoy total artistic freedom to innovate, but do not keep an eye on budget objectives, deadlines, appointments with suppliers and clients and so on, the result will be dreadful chaos.

On the other hand, there is the 'bureaucratic trap': because of an overemphasis on structure there is insufficient space for entrepreneurship. A lack of freedom and responsibility threatens to make the creative power disappear.

A mix of both represents 'structured chaos' which requires constant direction and demands a high level of intelligence, knowledge, experience and a sense of responsibility from the players. This approach can even lead to powerful innovative and creative ideas. As a strategy, structured chaos demands more preparation, attention and follow-up of management.

Structured chaos cannot, then, be expressed by a formula. A textile company that designs clothing employs stylists. It is quite possible that one day they just sit around and accomplish nothing between

ten and eleven in the morning because at that moment they are simply lacking inspiration – a form of artistic freedom that has to be tolerated to some extent within the company. As one entrepreneur put it: 'In reality, you have to be able to direct employees without their sensing that they are being directed, so that you don't block their creativity.' On the other hand, in a company such as the Belgian Railways, chaos must be minimised. Because an important objective in this business is the punctuality of the trains, even one hour of inactivity is unacceptable.

An essential role for the entrepreneur is to ensure that each employee in the company has sufficient freedom and just enough structure to function optimally. Then every employee at every level will constantly be striving to improve processes and to update products.

A similar pattern can be applied to the world of the artist. Here too a structured chaos can guarantee that artistic freedom is not stifled, but is actually stimulated: by means of manipulating a particular structure in the creation, the production and the unveiling or performance of a work of art. Freedom and structure attract and repel each other until a certain equilibrium is reached, a balance that, incidentally, must continually be examined, adjusted and called into question.

Clearly, the equilibrium is precarious. The entrepreneur's final objective is to supply a product and to make a profit. An artist's ultimate objective is to convey a message to society through his art work. Both attempt to create something that speaks to the public. In that sense their differences do not seem so great, and the two meet on a common ground. 'Structure' and 'freedom' can thus capitalise on one another.

The management of a large art centre is a good illustration of the interplay between 'structure' and 'freedom'. At one of the seminars, Erik Temmerman, director of the Vooruit art centre in Ghent, explained how. The policy he pursues is to exercise strict supervision to make sure budgets are followed, but to give the creative artists and staff members maximum freedom to develop within the organisation. The policy thus attracts people who are more motivated by relationships of mutual trust than by external controls. They are individuals who can work independently, who enjoy creative power, have growth potential and an open mind.

'We try, therefore, to 'knit' rather than 'bake' our budgets. A baked budget looks like a French baguette; it is substantial, you can lean on it and you can hit the table with it. A well-baked budget has a significant value and force, internally as well as externally. But as soon as you want to implement fundamental changes you run into problems and your solid loaf crumbles. By contrast, you can take a knitted budget apart over and over without any difficulty and without doing any damage. The disadvantage is that you cannot lean on your knitting, and you cannot hit the table very hard with it. But it does offer the option of playing into new developments along the way.'

(Erik Temmerman, at the seminar 'Can creative talent be managed? Finding a balance between freedom and control')

The state

Not only do art and the economy have a relationship of attraction and repulsion, there is a third party with whom both have a twofold relationship: the state. Many entrepreneurs believe that the state is the last agency that should interfere with art and the econ-

omy. Others feel that the state should be involved. In the economy the state imposes regulations, impedes monopolies, creates a labour-friendly climate and much more. But in the world of art as well, the state must step in because art plays an important role in our society. The state must be the primary agency to support art through policy and financing.

The role of the state is of 'vital importance', as one entrepreneur put it. In recent decades this role, especially in the arts, has expanded enormously. It didn't happen without a struggle. Take the situation in the Flemish Community. Starting in the sixties, subsidies were sparse, intermittent and haphazard, and recipients were not required to provide much accountability. In the seventies and eighties more and more rules were introduced. The state assumed a strong position as patron, thus increasing bureaucracy. In the nineties, with the introduction of several specific ordinances such as the Performing Arts Decree and the Music Decree, some branches of art were generously subsidised while others received little, resulting in a surplus in one genre and a shortage in another.

The new Arts Decree will clarify whether the state has found a middle road between random and insufficient subsidies on the one hand and a professional selection process and adequate subsidies on the other. Specialised assessment commissions examine the content of projects, supported by advice from the administration as regards the business aspects, and final approval is given by the Ministry of Culture.

Businesses can also obtain state subsidies for certain ideas and products they wish to develop, based on significant technological innovation. Here too, dossiers must be submitted, for instance to

the Institute for the Promotion of Innovation By Science and Technology in Flanders (Instituut voor de Aanmoediging van Innovatie door Wetenschap en Technologie in Vlaanderen, IWT). The dossiers are assessed by specialists.

One point of contention for both art and the economy is the question: who are the specialists serving on these commissions? If they come from the same field, they may be competitors. If they represent a different cultural or economic branch, their knowledge of the material may be called into question.

One view is that the status quo, namely using specialists from the field, is the best of the worst. Another opinion suggests that the disciplines be mixed, that is, have the economists advise on proposed art projects and vice versa. The more the 'know-how' is distributed, the more solid the assessment will be.

Some have no faith in the subsidy model. They feel that businesses can use their own power and competence to stimulate artists' initiatives, which will then be productive in their own way. Art and the economy would then agree on creativity and productivity. In this model the artists could even make a 'profit' in some form or other: in other words, business in cooperation with art.

Many entrepreneurs object to this model, saying that if you mix art and the economy, the art is lost. Art does not exist simply to raise proceeds.

The reference to 'making it independently' is actually a form of 'struggle to survive'. Most of the time entrepreneurs have to make their own way and the competition is ready to trip them up. They keep a careful eye on artists who 'get money to do their own thing'. According to one entrepreneur, 'it would be better to abolish art

subsidies'. But even the most liberal capitalistic entrepreneur in this country is subsidised by the society in which he lives, through the state authorities: the latter provide training for employees, traffic infrastructure, social benefits and so on.

Whether a subsidy is for art or for the economy, if the state provides funding, it requires concrete proposals from the artists, agencies or businesses. Yet here too there is a difference. A business is obligated to present a business plan, a marketing plan, an investment plan encompassing the near future, the medium term and the distant future. But is it possible, in the world of art, a world in which creation and innovation are pre-eminent, to draw up a plan with long-term goals? The Arts Decree requires a proposal for the contents as well as a business plan for a maximum term of four years. Apparently, in the dossiers submitted the plans become increasingly vague and general each year. Here too, it remains to be seen if the models used in the world of business can be applied to the world of art.

Local versus global

Both art and the economy have to do with the phenomena of 'local' versus 'global', with their parallels as well as the tensions between the two. By far most artists are and remain local artists and by far most entrepreneurs produce for the local market. Only those who dare to go beyond their borders, to expand and to export, enter a new dimension that opens doors to international recognition, whether as an artist or as a multinational.

The Belgian artists Constant Permeke and Roger Raveel are among those who had or have a strong, intrinsic value as artists.

But they chose to continue to work locally, opting for little or no international contacts and avoiding networking. Their interest remained more local than international although they received international recognition. In contrast, Picasso left for Paris when he was very young, because he knew and felt that the French capital was 'the place to be' for an artist, with its art market, galleries, critics, museums, patrons and a concentration of many other great artists. Picasso became a universal artist, a reference point.

The same contrast is evident in local as opposed to international artistic trends.

'Impressionism originated in France and spread to impressionistic schools in England, Belgium, Spain, Russia and the Netherlands. It took flight, with its universal themes appealing to many peoples and cultures. If you compare this phenomenon with the Latem School, for instance [based in a small town near Ghent], which remained local, focussed on a narrow theme and soon died out...'

(A participant)

The economy reflects a similar contrast. Entrepreneurs who dare to look beyond their borders, who seek new growth markets and turn new ideas into marketable products, are a step ahead of those who limit themselves to a local perspective, the here and now.

Those curators of modern art who are active worldwide are strongly focussed on the attraction between art and the economy. Artists are increasingly required to keep their audience in mind. Whether it be an exhibit, a biennial, or *documenta,* these events make their profit from the number of visitors who come. Accessibility, an element of spectacle, and a certain amount of lightness are always

appreciated. Young artists are going to become accustomed to this way of approaching art, which will have detrimental effects on their creativity and the depth of their discourse.

'The enemies of artists and of art right now are the systems, the layers that separate us from the work of art and that are busy organising themselves, and that on a worldwide scale.'

(Joëlle Tuerlinckx, at the seminar, 'Art in harmony with business objectives')

This is not just about the curator. Now there is also the 'airport artist', who flies around the globe and works on site all over the world. In his own way he is making the most of the rapidly growing globalisation of the world economy, and consequently, of art. In contrast there is the local, regional artist. From an economic perspective, does he supply a regional product? Globalisation would appear to supplant the local in favour of a series of uniform global products. The 'airport artist' flies from country to country, from festival to biennial, from large commission to international museum exhibition. Because airport artists spend so much time in travel, they work on the road – quite a contrast to the stay-at-home studio artist. Airport art takes a contemporary form: it is made up of photos, videos, installations, performances, work that answers to the demands of travelling light. Hallmarks of national or local origin are qualities that have disappeared from this art. Art has become interchangeable, to be compared with an international chain that brings its products to the market worldwide under one logo.

The link to the economy is clear: businesses, too, are going international, and prefer to produce goods on the spot under the cheapest conditions, producing an increasingly uniform product, from

Zara clothing in Helsinki to Nokias in Madrid. Globalisation is apparently elbowing out the regional in favour of a series of uniform world products.

'Everyone has to consume the same thing, watch the same films, read the same books, take the same trips, and strive for the same enjoyment. And we, the entrepreneurs, are going to make it happen with the resulting downfall of many individuals. On the one hand you have globalisation that leads to openness, and on the other this same globalisation causes people to lose their identity.'

(A participant)

Some entrepreneurs resist this globalisation and are developing a new regionalism in response. They again pose the question of their own identity, whereby the characteristics of a region become the weapon to use in the fight against globalisation. It seems to be effective on a certain level: local products have a certain romantic, nostalgic appeal. But the idea that we can derive our identity from our regions is itself a regressive movement. It is the desperate response to another universal world, experienced as strange and incomprehensible.

This field of tension is just what occupies some artists. The subject of their work is precisely the uncertainty of their own identity, its negation of what does not suit it. These artists create no airport art, but test the man-made world for its sustainability. Their critical searching, their obvious doubt of visible reality and of the meaning of the self are in direct opposition to the personal familiarity of the local. The adoption of this position makes the artist an annoying outsider. But the entrepreneur can also be an outsider in his own way.

'Already in the twenties, the Austrian economist [Joseph] Schumpeter noticed the similarities between the artist and the creative entrepreneur. According to Schumpeter, they are both driven by a desire to burst open what exists and insert something different in its place. They foment unrest; they form a threat to the status quo. Their 'pathos', their fiery passion to go beyond the limits of the here and now, unite them. The entrepreneur breaks the balance of the market by introducing a new or improved product and sets off a new spiral of supply and demand – which can mean a violent breach of existing economic relationships. With his work, the artist effaces old patterns and creates new ones in their place – and it can take some time before the artist's patterns become the established patterns and his offer merges with the call to the familiar path. (...) The entrepreneur's passion for expansion helps the artist along, making the material world bigger, precisely as the domain where art can meet the other and engage in discussion. The reverse is that the entrepreneur needs the artist to safeguard the cultural component of his trade and to prevent him from becoming an iron-fisted neocolonial. Such a productive collaboration of culture and business yields new renaissances effortlessly.'

(Lex ter Braak, at the seminar 'The world market pays the piper and calls the tune')

During the Renaissance, art and the economy, scholarship and exploration were remarkably linked. The state, entrepreneurs and artists respected each other, and showed interest in one another. An early form of globalisation (within Europe), which manifested itself in a blossoming of culture and art. The economy and art exercised a significant force of attraction on one another. From the ideas of the artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci in Italy to

the massive flow of Flemish art from the harbour of Antwerp...art could not exist without the economy, and vice versa.

'During the Renaissance something happened, something we are once again keenly seeking: the merging of art and science, of trade and creativity, of world exploration and the desire for eternal beauty, of artistic production and commercial acquisition–a climate that furthers innovation and artistic renewal, the consequence of what Richard Florida calls 'the creative city'. Merchants, scholars, explorers and artists seemed to find each other effortlessly, and their encounter proved mutually enriching.'

(Lex ter Braak, at the seminar 'The world market pays the piper and calls the tune')

The 'creative class'

In 2002 the American economist Richard Florida surfaced rather suddenly from obscurity. He indicated that there is such a thing as a 'creative class', a class with its own norms and values, a class that is constantly growing. Creative people rule the world, he wrote.

But it was a second proposition that made him especially popular with a number of policy makers. As it happens, he discovered that companies can develop more easily in an environment in which art and culture thrive, in a world in which women and homosexuals also have opportunities, in a milieu to which artists feel attracted. Apparently, tolerance, culture and the economy go together.

Who belongs to this creative class Florida 'discovered'? He defines creativity as 'the ability to create new meaningful forms.' The crea-

tive class consists of people who are paid to create. Florida distinguishes two levels within the class. Scientists and engineers, professors, poets and writers, actors, designers and architects belong to the nucleus of the class as do cultural figures such as analysts, publishers and others who influence public opinion. They are all people who create 'new things' for a large public. They compose music that can be performed again and again, or they invent a theory with far-reaching consequences.

In the wake of this inner core one can find a second group of creative professionals, who work in knowledge-intensive sectors: high technology, financial services, judicial high-tech and management. These are the individuals whose strengths include creative problem solving.

In short, Florida 'discovered' that more and more individuals have to depend exclusively on their knowledge and talent in their careers. Not really a surprising conclusion. But do these people really form a 'class'?

Absolutely, according to the American economist. In the first place, the statistics support the argument. In 1900 a mere one per cent of the American population was employed in creative jobs. But in 1980 that number rose to 15% and twenty years later the figure doubled to 30%.

The creative class has, furthermore, a number of norms and values in common. For example, its members prefer not to conform to outdated or prescribed rules. And something quirky artists and eccentric scientists share: they are all individualists.

In addition, they are all prepared to work hard. They are receptive to challenges and stimulation. They know they are good at what they do. They have a firm confidence that their salaries reflect their abilities. Meritocracy is their second hallmark.

That they want to be judged on merit immediately implies a third characteristic: diversity, openness. People with talent do not wish to be judged on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation or physical appearance. However, their openness may sometimes be limited to the creative elite itself: an Indian top artist is highly appreciated, whereas a Polish cleaning woman much less so.

The creative class is very hard-working. Its members make no distinction between their working lives and their private lives. They are always busy. Creative people never stop.

Creativity has become an essential component of our living and working lives. That has far-reaching consequences for everyday living. Scarcely thirty years ago, the family was at the centre of existence, the nucleus of responsibility and control. In exchange, family members enjoyed safety and security. Today relationships are much looser as people are increasingly mobile, friendships change, demands on time are greater. In time past, a male's role could be three-fold: writer, husband, and father. Today so much more is possible at the same time: writer, researcher, rock artist, consultant, cyclist, art lover, amateur chef and whiskey connoisseur. This plurality is also the hallmark of the creative class.

An important consequence of this is the existence of the polar opposite of the 'creative class': the 'service class'. These are people with low qualifications and low pay, people from the so-called 'service sector' of our economy, individuals who work at fast food restaurants, the concierges, the security guards, the cleaning women. According to statistics, this class is also growing.

It is worth noting that Florida places actors, painters, musicians and other artists in the same category as creative entrepreneurs who begin new companies and bring about economic growth. He

asserts that they share identical values and norms.

With numerous American examples he subsequently demonstrates how the economy functions better in a tolerant environment. A society that offers opportunities to gays, lesbians and immigrants, a society in which women can find top positions and that mobilises resources for culture and art, also provides the economy with greater prospects for growth.

Florida is not suggesting that homosexuals are by definition more creative than heterosexuals, or that women are better at approaching issues than men are, or that immigrants are more talented than native-born residents of a country. That is not the question. The point is that the preconditions for economic growth are identical to those for the personal growth of artists, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and immigrants.

If this is so, then Europe with its cultural diversity and its long tradition of cultural diversity has a competitive edge over the USA and Japan.

But not everyone agrees with Florida's views. Opponents raise the question of cause and effect. Do regions in which artists are active do well economically because there is more creativity, freedom and innovation? Or are artists attracted to areas that are healthy economically because the conditions for creating and selling art are favourable? It is the chicken and the egg scenario. For this reason, some find Florida's proposals dubious and insufficiently demonstrable.

'Florida has estimated that up to 30 percent of the American work force is currently involved in activities he classifies as creative. So what happens when that figure creeps up to 50% and higher? What happens

when all manual and industrial jobs are outsourced to places like China, and the citizens of post-industrial cities all become, in some sense, artists? How can this separation of creativity and production be a good thing? The first person I asked was Michelangelo Pistoletto, artist, artistic director of Cittadellarte and head of the Pistoletto Foundation.... 'Creativity for its own sake is something that ends up in a museum', Pistoletto told me. 'But creativity can outline the parameters, the ways in which we can think about the relationship between people and the planet. We need responsible transformation which really changes the system of competition. Products are bearers of messages. So I want to see these messages which art can convey in the form of products, messages about responsible social transformation.''

(Comment by Momus on www.wired.com/news/culture, 4 October 2005)

Power magnetises

Finally, there is still another magnet: the seductive force of power.

An entrepreneur can gain power if he can use a new product to develop a monopoly successfully which will enable him to reach a large proportion of consumers. Occasionally a monopoly will become controversial with government and competition, as was the case with Microsoft.

An artist has a more specific power: he is unique, as the sole producer of his art. The artist has the power to manipulate or to destroy; he can prevent the consumer from enjoying his artwork because the artist is, ultimately, the initial consumer of his creation.

This may seem to be an exaggerated illustration, but in the world of art and the economy this is really how things sometimes

work. A wealthy entrepreneur who enjoys champagne and caviar every day, owns five Ferraris etc., can literally be brought to his knees by a gallery owner in his appeal to purchase a particular work from a particular artist. Money is not the only way to give the artwork meaning. The artist and the gallery owner will decide who is socially, culturally and economically worthy of owning the art. They seek a precarious balance between artistic importance (exhibition in several top museums) and economic importance (part of several large private collections).

The majority of private collectors are, in fact, entrepreneurs. They have the ability to engage in and direct the subtle power play around supply and demand. Museum collections, particularly in English-speaking countries, are often completely dependent upon sponsors and patrons, and are thus in the hands of entrepreneurs. It is a complex balance of power.

Conclusion

It is clear that art and the economy exercise a certain force of attraction on one another. As for repulsion, there does not seem to be much of that. The two even share common ground in the concept of 'failure': art, because its function to create only what is beautiful has been lost; the economy, because it is destined constantly to create new temptations. Both benefit from a structured chaos: art, because it provides artistic freedom with a workable basis, and the economy because it allows creativity into rigid thought and work processes. Both have a love/hate relationship with the state although they cannot survive without this third party. Both are confronted with the tension between regional and global approaches,

but also with the potential of each. Art and the economy cannot exist independently if we want creative places and cities.

In the following entracte Jan Leysen, an entrepreneur, discusses his fascination with the force of attraction that artists and entrepreneurs exert on each other.

Entracte 2
Quest

A quest for the answer to the question why art and the artist occupy such a vital, almost mythical place in the life of the entrepreneur. Why are artefacts collected and cherished? Are they hunting trophies or do they have a deeper significance?

As an entrepreneur, you know that your company makes huge claims on you if your aim is success. Whether you produce goods or supply services, the company is a greedy partner. You are forced to work for many hours in an atmosphere where predominantly economic patterns apply. Naturally you are pleased that achievements are expected in the world of business, but the need to relax the pace every now and then is equally real. The demanding nature of the company is fulfilling for many people, but others experience it more as a confrontation with the limits of the economic world, a confrontation that does not provide any lasting sense of fulfilment.

Not only does art transcend reality, but what is more, the artist creates his own reality. The entrepreneur does not have that option. He must prove himself within the reality of the economic system, acquiescing to its regularities, regardless of his creativity.

Don't we envy the artist his freedom? Who can afford the luxury of dismissing the economic system and simultaneously enjoy-

ing the respect and privilege offered by the players in that system?

The artist constantly evidences his wilfulness and non-conformity: he creates new frames of reference, formulates criticism of traditional dogmas, and mocks the classical order. Ironically, the object of the artist's mockery, the target of his assertiveness, ensures that he has an eminent position, a position at once inside and on the edge of the business world.

The shifting of borders by art or the artist fascinates us, and perhaps also inspires us. To see another facet of reality teaches us that there are other ways of looking at reality. It challenges us to take aspects of the artist's soul and add them to our own organisation. We learn from art and from the artist and we attempt to imitate his creativity and to apply it to our world. It does not make us artists but entrepreneurs with a broader perspective, with the realisation that there are many realities. The artist sharpens our field of vision.

Is art also a refuge, an oasis?

How heavenly it is to sit, alone, in a museum or gallery, allowing the power of a masterly work of art to flow over you. It makes you feel good to be overwhelmed by the sublimity of such a work. How blissful to enjoy, albeit briefly, not having to account for anything, having no responsibility for what occupies you at the moment. What a wonderful experience to be confronted with magnificence or power, surrounded by beauty, to be profoundly moved.

Art as escapism, as panacea – I think it works. Let it absorb us for a while longer, before reality knocks at the door again.

How we love to be challenged by discourse with the artist about art, his reality, vision of reality (if it exists). In every sense of the word, leaning back to contemplate the world...

The artist shares his vision of the world, permitting us to look through his often narcissistic gaze, so coveted by us, at his world. Evenings of wine and conversation do not touch on our ambitions or our responsibilities the next morning. We join the path of illusions and ideals; like beginners we allow ourselves to be convinced of the importance of that one drawing, that one installation, for the rest of the world. Ah, we know that it is true, we want to feel it. At that moment we believe in that reality. A reality in which freedom and self-will reign... let's linger for just a while longer.

So why do we gather the fruits of the artist, wandering from gallery to gallery, show to show, to atelier after atelier?

No, these are not hunting trophies, not cups from senseless sporting events. Each and every one is a furtive illusion, a reflection of recurring dreams. In a work by Veerle Van Durme and Lieven Van Den Abeele about an art exhibit made up of private works and entitled 'The Mirror of Desire', we read: '*Jean Baudrillard refers to the art collection as the perfect pet. 'It is the only creature whose qualities extend my person,' he writes, 'rather than limiting it.' Maurice Rheims talks about 'a docile dog that is petted and responds to our affection, as*

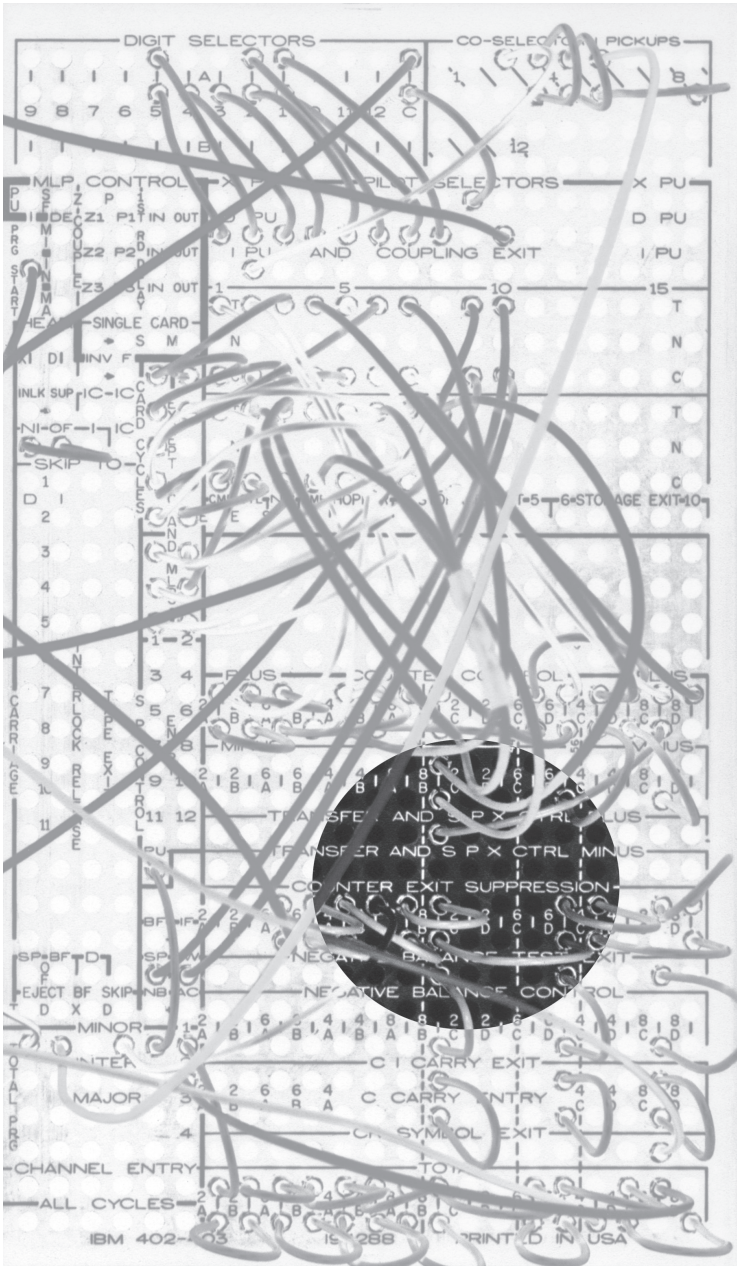
a mirror reflects images, not of reality, but of our desires."

Art... no world without it can call itself a world.

Jan Leysen

CHAPTER 2

ART AND THE ECONOMY ARE LIKE A YOUNGER AND AN OLDER BROTHER



The force of attraction between art and the economy is definitely a reality. But which is the biggest and the strongest? What is the power dynamic between art and the economy? Is art by definition the younger brother, and the economy the older brother? Can the economy easily do without art, because art does not present any material added value? Can art not exist without the economy, because then there would be no consumption of art? Or is the relationship like the David and Goliath narrative: the little brother can gain the upper hand because he is more inventive? In fact, both can benefit the other.

'Economic thought dominates philosophy; in particular, it dominates the entire relationship to reality. I think it is exceedingly important for us as artists to remain vigilant about our role and our position, even if it is difficult at times, and it often is very difficult indeed. But as essential as it is that there be an economic mode, it is important that there be parallel ways to express and develop that are vital – in your view, I hope, as in mine – for the world, for society and for human relations.'

(Joëlle Tuerlinckx, at the seminar 'Art in harmony with business objectives')

Creativity increases when the need is greatest, according to the cliché. It is the concept of the *'peintre maudit'*: a good artist should suffer. He is a minute, indigent link in the massive chain of the economy. The more difficult the situation, the more innovative the results.

But the idea of the *'peintre maudit'* is outdated. The artist must have enough physical space to be able to function. If it is true that prosperity and wealth deaden creativity, then you would practically have to deter businesses from making a profit. Whereas business-

es need precisely to generate the resources to give creativity, flexibility and inventiveness the space they require.

As one entrepreneur expressed it, 'The assumption that we should not generate much profit in order to stay creative simply does not hold true.'

An artist has to create out of a certain amount of restlessness. Some say that he has to experience an existential anger to be able to work inventively. If an artist has too few means, if the subsidies at an art institution dry up or are paid too late, the artist and the organisation experience considerable pressure and must begin to search for solutions. Usually they convene around a table and brainstorm for creative proposals to arrive at an answer.

Doesn't this happen in businesses as well? If particular objectives are not reached in a company, you have a comparable situation. There too, people try to reach a solution via creative brainstorming, for example by tapping into new markets, reorganisation, and evaluation of production costs that are too high and/or a turnover that is too low.

More than the economic world, in which commercial considerations play a role, the art world can be a hotbed of new business and ideas. A new economic product must be profitable, whereas a new piece of art does not need to be. But that is no reason not to develop the artistic side or to avoid innovative paths. The state can proffer support here with a good arts policy. But it cannot help if the economy does not ensure that there is a 'rich' environment in which primary social needs are covered and which provides the state with the resources to support the art world.

Art enterprises

On at least one level the economy has an advantage over art: organisation, structure and policy. The art sector is still in a beginning phase. Many art institutions – theatres, music ensembles, museums, art centres – had for years been confronted with a lack of efficiency and they needed management tools. In the meantime some of them have become art enterprises in which economic principles are almost as important as artistic principles. The tools the older brother uses have been borrowed by the younger brother.

'The first thing we did was to fill the Vooruit café with volunteers, students from Sint-Lucas and the Academy. We were able to make good use for this purpose of the outstanding art education in Ghent. We likewise valued the naïve ambition to finance our reorientation project with the proceeds of our café. And indeed, the first weeks and months after we reopened the nicely renovated café, it was full of people every day... We thought that we would be able to keep enough of the profits from our flourishing café both to renovate the property further and to develop an ambitious artistic programme. In the first year of operation we did indeed succeed, thanks to the gigantic turnover from the catering business. But soon enough it became evident that even a very successful café would never generate the cash necessary for restoring the property as well as developing an artistic programme.'

(Erik Temmerman, at the seminar 'Can creative talent be managed? Balancing freedom and control')

Professional forms of management, organisation and structure were and continue to be implemented in art enterprises. The nineties were marked by a rapid evolution in the artistic landscape of Flanders. With new decrees, subsidies for companies and art cen-

tres and later a support centre, new educational programmes in universities and post-secondary institutions, a decree for artists and other measures, a strong, professional landscape has developed. The new Arts Decree obliges each institution that is recognised by the decree and that receives subsidies to set out a business policy as well as an artistic one.

Typically, new art enterprises are far less advanced in this regard than those that have long had a 'structured', that is, subsidised, existence: the big theatre companies, art centres such as deSingel in Antwerp, Vooruit in Ghent, Bozar in Brussels, and large musical companies such as the Flemish Opera and the Royal Flemish Philharmonic. These differences are so great that older brother and younger brother relationships exist even within the arts community. Indeed, one can speak of monopolies forming. In the arts sector it is a given that large arts centres have to be sufficiently distant geographically from one another. A Vooruit in Ghent or a deSingel in Antwerp is workable, but a comparable hall in, say, nearby Sint-Niklaas is not. The Concertgebouw (concert hall) in Bruges illustrates how difficult it is for a large arts establishment to be profitable in a small city. The whole discussion about the Forum, a new centre for music and the performing arts in Ghent, relates to the same problem: the other arts establishments in Ghent fear the competition. The state providing the subsidies endorses this view. It wants to see the funds it grants used in the best possible way and as wide a region as possible. Internal competition, such an integral part of the economy, is viewed here as counterproductive.

Subordinate?

The economy can support art as an older brother does a younger brother. The entrepreneur who permits artists to manufacture their products in his factory with technical support, the entrepreneur who invests in a company collection or a private collection, the entrepreneur/patron who finances an artistic project...these are unmistakably relationships in which we recognize the older and the younger brother.

The entrepreneur – whether collector or patron – has scores of motives for supporting art: personal, strategic, image-oriented and so on. Regardless, he provides the artist with the economic basis to be able to work.

Is the artist in a subordinate position? Is this a remnant of the patronage system from the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, when first the affluent Church and then the wealthy urban middle class literally had artists living under their roof in order to create art? The situation has altered radically. There is less talk of subordination; artists have greater personal independence. And if they achieve a level of success, they can 'direct' the entrepreneur and even the economy: ultimately, they can determine who will gain access to their work.

Recovery

It is not always a given, then, that the artist is the younger brother and the entrepreneur is the older brother. There is even the familiar flip-side of the coin: the artist held hostage by his own fame, and threatened by being 'recycled'. The little David who does not triumph over Goliath.

'I want to tell the story of Robert Anton, the man who performed with puppets in his living room in New York. From time to time his friends and friends of his friends were invited to view the sensation of his performances. I was there once, as artistic director of the (avant-garde theatre centre in Amsterdam) Mickery. I invited Anton to bring his show to Amsterdam, to a small shed that was my office, in the courtyard behind the theatre. Sixteen spectators could squeeze into the small space.

Robert Anton acted out his most personal nightmares with the tiny puppets. The characters from his eeriest dreams came alive on his fingertips and displayed amazing ceremonies straight from hell. There he stood, clad in black, a fragile figure behind a small table on which the props of his imagination waited for him to bring them to life. (...)

After his success in the Mickery came the Nancy Festival in France founded by Jack Lang. In no time François Mitterand arranged a studio and accommodation for him at the Château Vincennes so Anton could create a new show within the castle's thick walls. He lived and worked there, assisted by Rodrigo, a deaf-mute friend. The 'beau monde' of Paris then took possession of him, and Robert ended up giving performances for the Parisian elite, imprisoned as their private plaything. After a year, the French reluctantly let him go to play his original performance in the Theater der Welt in Cologne, in a small medieval cellar complex.

After that, he was allowed to return home, dismissed, empty and exhausted.

He fled from New York to a large stable in Vermont which had been offered to him by friends to help him recover his strength. He must have come to the conclusion there that the demons had won, and within a year he committed suicide.

We ought to have managed our possessive mania and adulation better. We should have taken better care of him, also after we had gotten what we wanted from him.'

(Ritsaert ten Cate, at the seminar 'The art business is as well-oiled (and polluting) as the production business')

Economic pressure

The artist does not simply create; he seeks a place for himself in the world. Where is he visible and where does he wish to be visible? How can he preserve his integrity? Does art attract the economy and vice versa? Artists aver that ever increasing economic pressure is being exerted on the cultural environment and on art in particular.

'Since the eighties the art market has become a full-fledged economy. ... As an artist, I myself have to work with an economic apparatus, with a machine which I as an individual artist oppose. ... As an artist, an individual, you have to scratch your head and wonder about the whole system. But it is a model many artists accept because they want to become famous.'

(Luc Tuymans, at the seminar 'Art and the economy have no pure criteria for success.')

'Art and the economy: we see no difference'... the title for the seminars is, then, called into question.

'The proposition that there is 'no difference between art and the economy' is, at first glance, a provocation. It runs counter to the generally-held view that art is concerned with lofty or intangible values such as

sacrifice, honour and fame, whereas the economy is solely about money. In the last few years in Flanders and the Netherlands, a number of sociologists of art and economists have argued, within the context of the discussion on policy for subsidies, that the art world must be seen and directed as an 'economic sector' in which economic mechanisms operate. They suggested that artists use an economic logic and thought they would do well to realise this.

What does the proposition that 'there is no difference' mean, then? It suggests that art is produced, sold and consumed, that the best art is the art that is sold for a high price, whereas art which no one will buy cannot be good art. All things considered, artists are sole proprietorships that develop a product – in a very specific situation – to sell to a narrow segment of the market. Ultimately, doesn't an artist aspire to succeed? He wants to be successful and to be a winner. And winning usually comes down to making a profit and earning money.

Or does the proposition mean the opposite: that entrepreneurs should also have a bit of the artist in them? In order to succeed in art and in the economy, you need special skills; creativity, perseverance, initiative, willingness to take risks, insight into interpersonal relationships, an understanding of power. If this is true, artists and entrepreneurs have much in common…'

(Bart Verschaffel, at the seminar 'An artist can/may/must/ question society and therefore the economy as well')

Conclusion

The artist arrives, as the younger brother, in the parking lot of the entrepreneur who supports him. As he looks at the large factory, the disproportion between his artwork and the industriousness of the entrepreneur is immediately apparent. And yet, a trend toward

equality is gradually developing. The little artist and the big entrepreneur, the great artist and the little employee...

In the following entracte Philip Maertens, director of Siemens Automation & Drives, tells the story of a cooperative venture between his company and the artist Kris Vleeschouwer. What began as a predictable narrative about an older brother and a younger brother eventually turned into an exciting collaboration that benefited everyone: the company, the employees who worked on the project and the artist himself.

Entracte 3
The encounter of two worlds

The passion for bringing together two entirely different worlds has given rise to a creative collaboration between Siemens Automation & Drives on the one hand, and the art world in the person of artist Kris Vleeschouwer on the other. This encounter was set up and coordinated by the non-profit organisation Arteconomy.

In the economic world there is, in theory, no room for such things. Knowledge of the market, the right contacts and time are lacking, and there is generally no great interest or enthusiasm for artistic ventures: such targets are not included in the now obligatory business plan of any serious enterprise.

Through a happy coincidence, a contact did arise among Siemens, Arteconomy and Kris Vleeschouwer. From the very outset, the chemistry clicked. There was a connection, a fire, a creative impulse. In a spontaneous brainstorming session, the creativity of all three parties blended seamlessly, and a work of art, 'Glassworks', was created. The idea was as follows: Kris Vleeschouwer linked up glass containers at five different locations along the Brussels ring road. Each time someone threw a glass bottle into one of these containers, this was recorded, and the image and the signal were sent through electronically to an installation at the Bozar arts centre in Brussels. Vleeschouwer's installation consist-

ed of metal shelves full of empty glass bottles. Each time someone threw a bottle into one of the containers, a bottle fell from one of the shelves in the Bozar centre and shattered into smithereens on the floor. The installation was Vleeschouwer's submission for the Prix Jeune Peinture 2005.

That a multinational like Siemens should have taken part in such a project is quite unusual, and the company's motives are to be sought in the innovative and groundbreaking character of the venture. The novelty lies in the unconventional, non-classical approach to art. In a 'normal' relationship between art and the economy, the capital-rich giant multinational invests a certain amount in the purchase of a work of art or in sponsoring artists. This classical approach was not the one chosen here, since the Automation & Drives group, an autonomous department within the Siemens Group, did not have capital available to invest in a traditional manner in the art world.

The challenge was therefore to bring about a collaboration between art and business that was not based on a financial relationship. In the first instance this was an experiment. We did not know how it would turn out, and we did not have a specific target in mind. We did want to set up a creative collaboration, by means of existing resources, at the level of organisation, knowledge, training and material. In addition, we sought to involve a limited number of employees in the experiment, and thus to create a test case that might serve later for evaluation.

This cooperation indicates that people can work together in a creative fashion with others from an unfamiliar world. On the part of Siemens, the collaboration called for thinking outside the box, a

skill that is often lacking in an engineering firm, since its employees are used to keeping to their standardised processes and workflows. The artist, on the other hand, was offered an entirely new context in which to work: he learned how to carry out projects that in terms of size and impact were of a whole new dimension. He would never have been able to create this work of art without the help of the company. The impressive scale of the project in turn enhanced its power to attract the attention of curators and of the public: hence the work received much greater exposure.

This is important for the image of the artist, but also for the image of the company. Coming to people's attention via a social commitment is an important and valuable dimension for Siemens. For customers as well, there is an obvious message here: commitment goes hand in hand with innovative products and systems, and with innovative solutions.

Such a venture gives an important signal to employees as well, to 'break down boundaries', open up new domains, branches, clusters and niches and develop products in response to a clear demand on the part of the customer.

During the realisation of the project, there was never any question of commercialising the work or Siemens' efforts. However, the scope of the project made it clear that an artist today must be capable of developing other skills besides creative artistry. He must at one and the same time be a project manager, financial manager, logistics manager and master of the works.

Do dependence on other parties and the complexity of the project not, then, impose restrictions on the creative and artistic aspects of the work? Should an artist produce only works that he can realise and manage all alone, or can he also produce 'great' works for

which he draws upon the assistance of other parties, 'sub-contractors', as it were?

Siemens made its contribution through offering products, systems and know-how in industrial automation. Testing new products is in any case among the daily tasks of its employees. Collaborating on 'true' solutions, however, provides a particular dimension to product testing: the extra pressures of time and performance proved to be an added value, as compared with the usual open-ended testing in a training situation.

In realising the 'Glassworks' project, communication and visualisation were very important for Siemens. Both internal and external communication were involved, and there was much interest on the part of the press in the new way in which Siemens was approaching art. This project did not go unnoticed, and as a result, the initial goals were greatly surpassed.

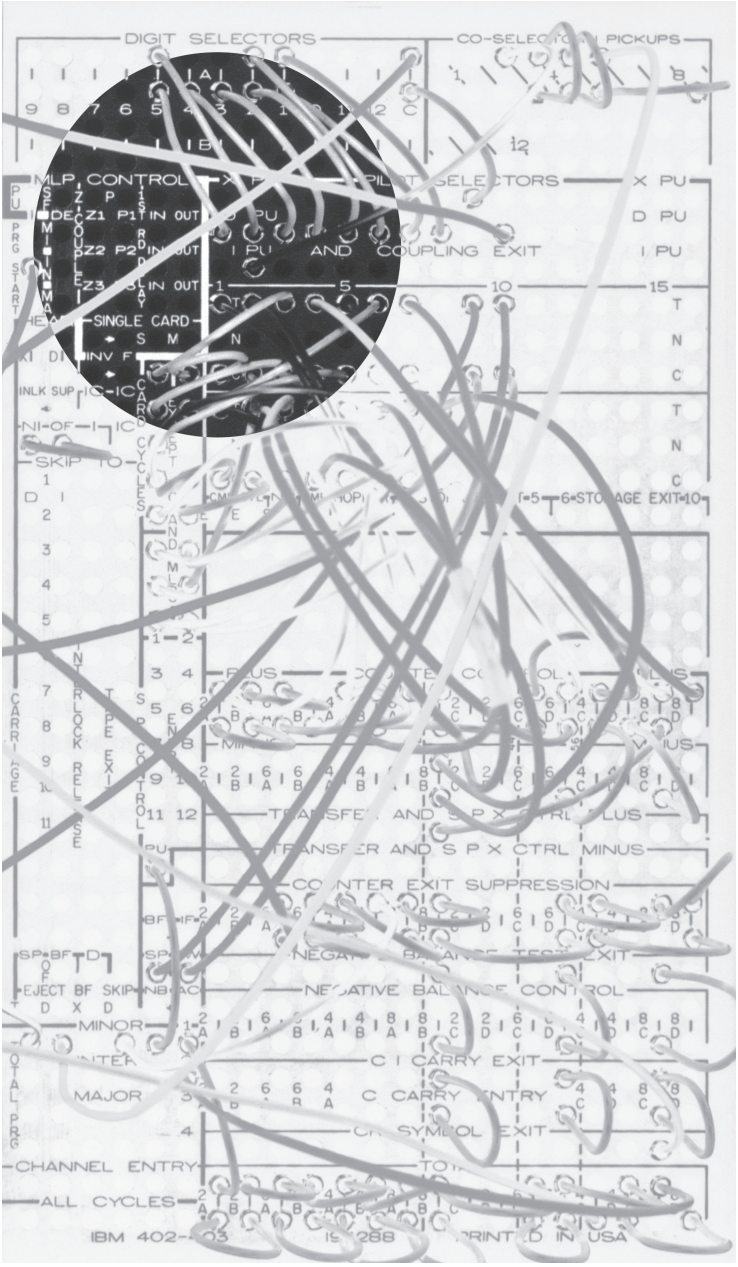
The work received the Prix de Bozar at the Prix Jeune Peinture Belge (Young Belgian painting prize) 2005, and was selected for Arco 2006 in Madrid, for the Sonambiente Festival Berlin 2006 and for Shanghai 2007. This attests to the impact, quality and current relevance of 'Glassworks'.

As the curators put it, 'It has a great impact and sends a strong message. The fact that many viewers could remain focused on the work for minutes at a time is testimony to this. First they sought with amazement what the work represents, then they waited for action, and then sought the meaning, the message of the work.'

Philip Maertens

CHAPTER 3

ART AND THE ECONOMY CAN BE TRUE ANTAGONISTS



'The act of seeking one's place as an artist, the quest for the precise point of view from which one wants to see and to be seen, may take quite a bit of time and come about after many a detour.'

(Joëlle Tuerlinkcx, at the seminar 'Art in harmony with business objectives')

'The market mechanisms no longer allow us, as entrepreneurs, to find peace in our 'drive to create', and may be said to be forcing us into a never-ending chain of innovative creations', says an entrepreneur.

The artist needs solitude, recollection, time and peace in his own studio. Material concerns, profit, money come second. The entrepreneur, by contrast, steers a ship that must be moving steadily towards its goal: to produce and make a profit.

These are two extremes within a very wide spectrum: the individual, independent artist, averse to all materialism, is positioned in direct contrast with the individualistic entrepreneur, feverishly seeking financial gain. Artists and entrepreneurs thus appear as antagonists in the social game.

There are indeed artists who try to remain financially independent of the need to sell anything at all: their income comes from elsewhere. They strive deliberately to allow their artistic creativity and inspiration as free a rein as possible, without being influenced by material considerations.

'The artist Willem (Oorebeek) is trying for the moment to see just how to remain independent in his work. The freedom he has and seeks comes

from a non-dependence on work; he is watching how his work develops without depending on sales.'

(Joëlle Tuerlinckx)

Other artists consider, on the contrary, that they have the right to live from their work: they create and produce with a view to making a living as well. The power of attraction can become so great that artists take on the profile of a small businessperson. They employ staff, have a web site, send the plans for their installations to major exhibitions and biennials, and the installations are put together on the spot by curators. In short, they build up a corporate-style structure.

Money

But is the artist really after making money? Is art no longer art if it becomes an economic object? And who is responsible for this state of affairs: the artist who makes a work of art for money, or the economy that sees art as a commodity?

An artist has completely different goals from an entrepreneur, and in that sense they have nothing in common with each other.

'A true artist does not work for money. In fact, he doesn't want to sell his work. He may give it away and receive some money in return, but he is not a manufacturer or a salesman. The artist does not produce a product: he creates a work 'for the sake of the work itself'. It must be like this and no other way, because he wants to make this *work, because it* has *to be like this. And not because it will sell better. Naturally, he wants the work to be persuasive and successful. Of course the artist dreams of*

fame as well. But surely the artist who sets out to produce art that will do well on the market and sell well, who adapts himself to the current vogue, cannot be a 'true' artist? That artist will produce either fake art or kitsch. His work may enjoy immediate success, but sooner or later that sort of art will meet with failure. An artist may grow rich from his art, but it should never really be about making money.'

(Bart Verschaffel, at the seminar on 'An artist can/may/must question society and therefore the economy as well')

Sometimes it seems that art and economy really do not go together. Here is a true parable:

A lady wanted to buy a work of art from a renowned artist. She went to all manner of trouble to meet with the gallery owner, but the latter kept her at bay. She continued trying, and returned several times to the gallery, until finally she made it onto the bottom of the list of potential buyers. What she didn't know was that she was being 'screened' the whole time. For the artist and the gallery owner were looking for an ideal mix of museums, art centres and collectors where they could try to place his work, with a view to building up as strong an image and growth potential as possible for the artist. The woman appeared to be a small but honest collector who sincerely cared about art. In the end, after three years, the gallery owner rang her up with the news that she could come and buy a work by the artist. When she came in, all the largest and best pieces had already been reserved for other, better-known collectors. There were only three small works left. She chose one, bought it and was absolutely thrilled. At last she had acquired 'her' first real work of art. But when she returned the next day to collect her purchase, it turned out that the sale would not go through after all. Charles Saatchi, one of the greatest dealers in contempo-

rary art, had come along and in one go bought up all the paintings, large and small, that were still hanging in the gallery.

Praise and blame

There is yet another contrast. An artist may draw praise from all sides, from critics and curators, although his works will never sell, perhaps because he produces nearly unsaleable installations. And an entrepreneur can produce great quantities and make huge profits and yet be despised by the community, for instance because he produces weapons. Merit is measured by very different standards in the world of art and in the economy.

An art institution can play a pioneering role, be truly innovative and therefore be honoured by positive reviews, notices, evaluations. But will people actually come to see it? Will the work reach the disadvantaged, the immigrants? The debate about participation that has been going on for a few years now, and in which there is a constant effort to balance quality and innovation on the one hand, and accessibility on the other, is in part a debate between Art and the Economy, deliberately written with capital letters. The fact that the debate on participation is so difficult shows that A and E sometimes come across as antagonists.

In the discussions during one of our seminars, an entrepreneur put it bluntly: 'We ought to 'dry out' cultural institutions. Or at least find a certain relationship between the amount given in subsidy and the ultimate turnover of a cultural institution.' The best known example is that of opera: no one will ever succeed in making a single production profitable, even if the opera house is filled to the rafters. The lower classes rarely or never attend, so that one

may ask whether this form of art, which is primarily aimed at the well-to-do, really ought to be subsidised. Should there not at least be an attempt made to achieve a degree of economic profitability, with more performances, touring productions, spin-off products, etc.?

But there is another perspective as well: by reasoning in this way, one turns art into a purely commercial concept. Productions such as the well-known folk dance show 'Lord of the Dance' or the Studio 100 Flemish children's programmes – K3, Samson & Gert, Kabouter Plop – are commercially viable, but this is more in the nature of entertainment, not art.

Society also gives money for education and sport. No one demands that a university professor be commercially viable, or that communal swimming pools should turn a profit. People assume that the government has a supporting and promotional function in these areas, and pays for it with its surplus income, that is to say, taxes. For in the long run, the economy benefits from healthy and well-educated citizens: *'mens sana in corpore sano'* is a classical concept that is still valid today.

Recovery

What about the rigid concept of art versus the economy on the one hand, and the long, complex process of inspiration, creation, collecting, exhibition and sales on the other? An artist produces a work that he sees as a product of high quality and value. When he begins to communicate about the work, he comes into contact with the outside world. At that point, a divergence appears between artistic and economic appreciation. Via the gallery, the work becomes the

subject of economic negotiation, but it also receives artistic appreciation. The economy is ready to co-opt the work: works are bought and sold with a view to financial added value, a higher return. The point at which the artist, here and now, sees his work as a unique, high-quality product is over and the work of art has become simply a piece of merchandise.

Quite a few successful modern artists play along with this game to a certain degree. They look first of all to the artistic value of their product, and then gradually, with the help of media marketing, globalisation and trendsetting, seek to convert it into an economic product that nevertheless has artistic value, a 'unique selling proposition'. In this sense, such an artist is at the head of his own small business, often with actual employees, each of whom in his own way contributes to the process of creation, execution, communication and marketing.

A successful artist will inevitably find himself caught up in the economic process. Demand becomes greater than supply, the artist must protect his artistic integrity from the lure of success and money.

Some artists do that in an almost deceitful way, and turn 'art' and the 'economy' on their heads. Andy Warhol, for instance, did that with his works incorporating the one-dollar bill, thereby deconstructing a fetish of the capitalistic world. The symbol of capitalism, the American dollar, became an artistic icon. Sixty years earlier, Marcel Duchamp did something similar with a urinal. An absolutely banal product became an absolute artefact. Art would never be the same again, nor would the economy, for that matter.

A Belgian artist such as Jan De Cock is aware of the danger of this antagonism between art and the economy.

'That is precisely the great malaise in contemporary art: too many artists are working with a budget that was granted them. Their work thus depends on a budget. If I make a work, it never depends on what I received from the institution. I create financial freedom for myself in order to be able to do what I think ought to be done... Too much thought is given nowadays to production costs. Whereas it would be better to produce a work first and only afterwards to look at how you can pay for it. That is how it has always worked. Artistic practice has a certain number of financial implications. An artist must look for a fertile ground, one on which many things can grow. The idea of the solitary being who can create something apart from society is an outdated, romantic notion. It is important for an artist to be able to build up financial independence for himself. And for this you need others, yes indeed.'

(Jan De Cock in a conversation with the author published in De Tijd of 25 March 2006)

A few quotations on this subject from our participants:

'As soon as art becomes the economy, and the economy art, I get a bad feeling. For I believe more in the contradiction between these two worlds than in their collaboration.'

'Artists who are unsuccessful are perhaps the truest artists.'

'You can only know that if you are successful.'

'Let the artist be what he is, let him keep his own parameters: ineffable, disturbing, passionate. If he uses other parameters, such as fame and money, then he has entered a different domain.'

Vanguard

Entrepreneurship cannot exist without a product that is in demand. The demand must grow and become as great as possible. In the case of art, that is less clearly the case. There must be demand, but it is not the priority. For the artist, producing art always comes first. Whether it will find an audience is an aspect that arises only later. It is even to the benefit of the artist if he is first confronted with a small vanguard, who gives a foretaste of the broader public's preferences. We see this phenomenon in other economic sectors as well, such as fashion, design and the production of other luxury goods. There, too, one works with a 'vanguard': products are tested among a select group of trendsetters, who are then imitated by the general public.

A good illustration of the fact that this vanguard function can be both economic and artistic is the case of Charles Saatchi. This former British advertising guru is now one of the most important dealers in contemporary art in the world. He can make or break the reputation of an artist.

The – never officially confirmed – story goes that when he was a beginning collector, Saatchi made a phone call to Leo Castelli, who until his death in 1999 was one of the most influential gallery owners in the world. Saatchi offered to buy the entire group exhibit that Castelli was hosting in his New York gallery at the time. He thus obtained in one stroke the works of a group of young

European artists who were on the verge of a breakthrough. From that moment Saatchi became, at least for young English artists – the BritArt movement – the motor that helped make them into an influential part of his collection. They were to become world famous, and hence gained a not insignificant market value. But Saatchi held and still holds tightly onto the reins. If for some reason he no longer likes an artist, he does not hesitate to unload his entire œuvre on the market all at once, so that it loses all value. This perversion can go even further. A few years ago there was a fire in one of Saatchi's warehouses in London filled with BritArt. There was thus suddenly a scarcity in these works, which made their value rise again.

'After Jan Hoet's Documenta in 1992, three of Saatchi's assistants came to my little studio in Borgerhout. They offered me a million euro for one year's production. I did not accept the offer: if Charles Saatchi were to own thirty of my works, he would control me. He once unloaded the work of a certain artist onto the market and thereby destroyed his career. But of course you need the spunk and the intelligence to say no to such an offer.

Two days later, Saatchi rang me up to tell me what a clown I was. And he simply went ahead and bought some of my work at auction for incredibly high prices. He thus managed to get his hands on four of my works just a few weeks before the opening of an exhibit of new painting he was organising in London.'

(Luc Tuymans, at the seminar on 'Art and the economy have no pure criteria for success')

Art and the economy: are they truly antagonists? The artist must have inspiration and freedom of movement. The economic side, the 'money', only makes him dependent, drives him towards compromise.

'In the past you could work in a fairly unrestricted way as an artist. But this freedom is now completely gone. From the outset you are confronted with the phenomenon of networks, mutual relationships become evident much more quickly. I can understand that artists join a particular network in order to protect themselves, but that of course makes you dependent. And as an individual you become less visible.'

(Luc Tuymans)

Creativity

The economy has difficulty dealing with the unpredictable and the unforeseeable, in other words with a lack of planning. It tends to take a rigid approach, with its structures, planning and organisational charts. Yet the economy is interested in the idea of inspiration and creativity. But this interest is shaped mainly by external interests such as turnover and profit, and not by internal factors such as emotion or aesthetics, which do, however, play a role in art.

The difference between creativity in the economy and in art is that economic creativity looks for applause, that is, sales, while artistic creativity seeks criticism. For given that it takes a critical stance towards society, art in turn also expects criticism.

Art and the economy – are they really antagonists, then? Paradoxically, they cannot do without each other...

'To succeed more or less in relation to a work of art means that you understand that art is about something that is beyond money. In this sense art never fits in. This presents an obstacle to the 'contemporary period' which is governed by the exchangeability of objects. The very nature of the work of art is structurally opposed to the presuppositions of the dominant economic theory and practice.'

(Bart Verschaffel, at the seminar on 'An artist can/may/must question society and therefore the economy as well.')

'But', said a participant during an evaluation session, 'even for us as actors in the economic system, money is never the ultimate purpose. Life also consists of things, faces, people, memories, places, words and images that are inexchangeable.'

Conclusion

This is how things stand now. Art and the economy can both attract and repel each other like magnets; they can relate to each other like a younger and an elder brother, and can also stand in diametrical opposition to each other. But even in such an antagonism, nuances may be observed: the detached artist versus the money-hungry merchant is too rigid and even a false image. It is becoming increasingly clear that this is not an either-or but a both-and situation.

In the following interlude, entrepreneur Stef Vande Meulebroucke appeals for the foundation of an institute that aims at integrating artistic and economic tools, in order to counterbalance the exaggerated notion of constant innovation.

Entracte 4
Innovation is dead, long live integration!

Integration is impossible without hindering the other

Is the goal of working to earn money? As soon as working is aimed at adding 'something' of an economic nature to this world, or, even more generally, something of social interest, money is the means whereby that 'added value' is rewarded. And the way to increase the exchangeability of what has been created.

I assume that the aspect of 'earning money', for those who have a strong urge to 'create', strongly depends on the artist's personality and plays a more or less subordinate role. We can assume that both the artist and the entrepreneur have a strong drive towards personal development, in both cases by adding something as unique as possible, in short, by creating.

But how is it possible that today the unbridled dynamism of creation is developing as never before? I suppose that the ever greater exchangeability of creative works plays an important role in this. But is that a good thing?

Artists have rarely produced so great and varied a range of artworks as today. But where are we going with this immense flood of 'creativity'? Does 'creating' mean something more than just 'trying to do something original with a story'? Can we not expect an artist to go a little further than that? Must he not at the very least make an attempt to form a snapshot of the broader social, cultural and economic activity?

Bart Verschaffel says in this regard: *'That requires a sort of intelligence in art, a capacity for judgment that goes beyond even 'social criticism'. It has to do with the problem, as an artist, of picking the time and the place for expressing something in a well-chosen manner with all one's intelligence and experience, and then trying to put it into an inventive form. The critical element of a work of art lies in the fact that it slows us down, it acts as a hindrance.'*

The market mechanisms, meanwhile, no longer allow us as entrepreneurs any peace in our 'creative urge'. They drive us almost inexorably toward a never-ending, continuous chain of innovative creations. We are eclipsed by globalised management structures that seek ever more quickly to discover new niches in the market, in order that we may fill these as soon as possible. We demand perfect flexibility from people and resources; if yesterday we devoted them wholeheartedly to an innovation, today we realise that the niche was not large enough or was already filled, and we remove the people and resources from the project. And tomorrow we start all over again with a new innovation.

Do we not understand that this unlimited 'flood of innovations' looks more and more like a tactical game with short-term goals, rather than a true strategy aimed at added value over the long run? Have we as entrepreneurs enough strength, power and will to change this?

The artist may be able to help the entrepreneur in this effort. If the entrepreneur is trying in a well-meaning but blind manner to make an economic 'exchange' as smoothly as possible, then the artist and the artwork are able to make that a bit less straightforward. Perhaps even by putting the brakes on, shining a light through the

effort, dissecting it and putting it into perspective. Even though that in itself will not necessarily lead to better economic results in the short term, we are willing to stake our head on it that over the longer term it will do so.

What is that added value, then, that we entrepreneurs can offer the artist? Our added value may go much further than helping, through our collaboration, to make works of art even more rapidly exchangeable by giving them visibility, sponsoring, buying or selling them. Let us, on the contrary, delay that process and even try to hinder it.

Why hinder it? Helping the artist and deliberately slowing things down? How do we do that?

By providing the technology, people and know-how that can help artists realise their works with the most appropriate tools, and not with the ones that they may happen to have close to hand. We must make it possible for the artist to temporise a bit more with his work, with the aim of making current art as current as possible. And as a result, we as entrepreneurs must dare to take the time to listen to the artist's reflective and critical discourse.

Must we not give close consideration to how to go about this? And can we not use our knowledge and networks to transpose it into lines, stories, lessons, communication?

Innovation is as good as dead if people are not willing to see it in a broader perspective. It is not simply a matter of thinking outside the box, of analysing and referring to other developments within the same sector or in other economic sectors. Innovation must provide for a general social integration, touching on all possible

related concepts such as sustainability, ethics, pedagogy, development, anthropology, ecology.

Are we in turn going to try to quantify and measure all these concepts so that every innovation can be assessed in terms of a nice mathematical model? We have nothing against objective norms as such, for as a tool these can undoubtedly help provide useful information in certain areas. But we are firmly convinced that a well-founded reciprocal relation between artist and entrepreneur, placed in a broad perspective, can contribute enormously to a better integration.

It is not a single, isolated *ad hoc* testing, but a systematic application of informative cross-sections that will yield added value to any enterprise that is willing and ready to look further than its innovative nose.

The enterprise must be stimulated through this process, and must not limit itself to a few *ad hoc* initiatives. The state can play a role in achieving this. It should not stop at providing merely financial support to artists on the one hand, and purely innovative support to enterprises on the other. It should set up a platform for extending interdisciplinary research and bringing about an 'intersectoral' production dynamic between art and the economy. The Flemish Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT) should therefore be given a strong sister-organisation.

I have a dream of an **Institute for Innovation through Sustainable Integration of Art and Entrepreneurship**. An institute that would not be simply a giant database but that would actively work

as an intermediary matching partners from the two areas, and that would thus ensure that integration is achieved in both directions.

Such a institute would have to make sure that the artist is of use to the business world without being subordinated to it, and that the entrepreneur is of service to the artist without this having to cost him money. The creativity of both would thereby become deeper and more viable.

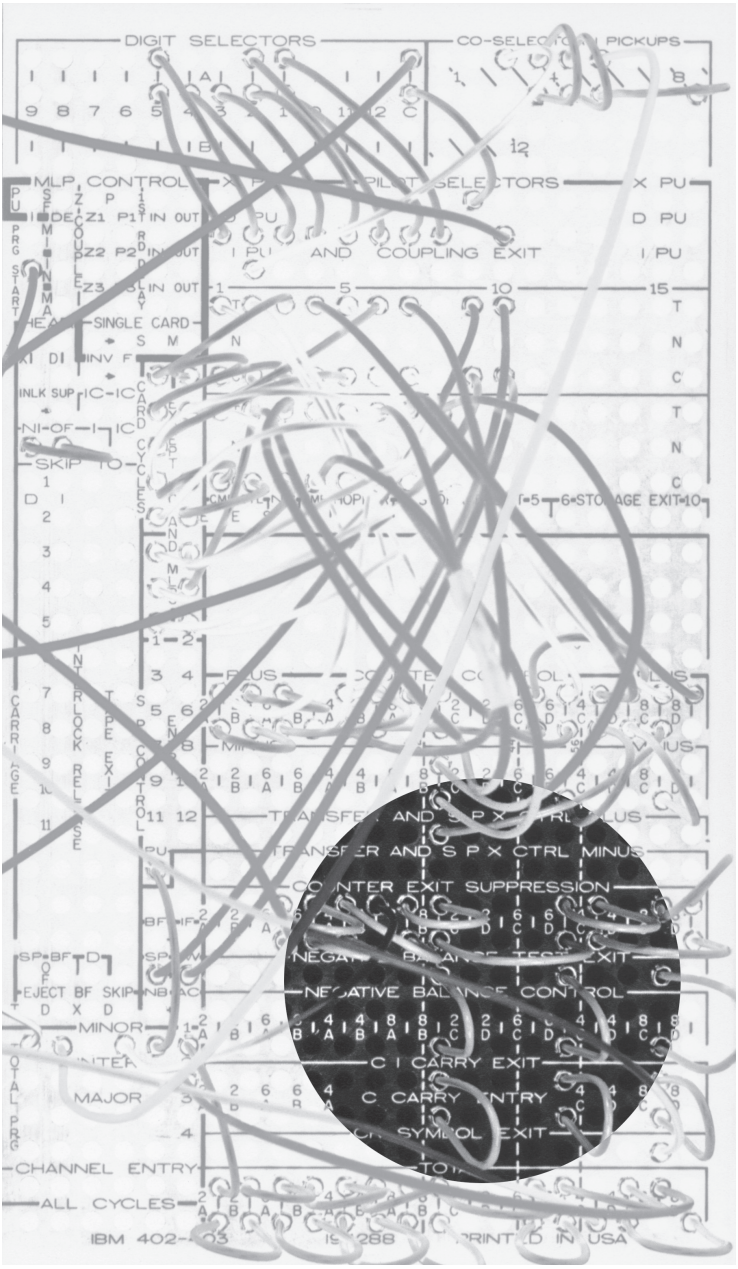
This sort of permanent encounter has to be organised. That is the new role that we must demand from the state. The entrepreneur will gain insights he never had before. The artist will be able to dig deeper and further and will be better equipped to say what he has to say.

Innovation is dead! Long live integration!

Stef Vande Meulebroucke

CHAPTER 4

ART AND THE ECONOMY SHAKE HANDS, WITH OR WITHOUT COMPROMISE



Until now, we have been situating art and the economy in an unequal relationship with each other. We have talked about the mutual attraction and repulsion in which the economy is mainly seen as the elder brother, and we have also looked at the discrepancies between them. Now we are moving more and more towards an equal relationship, based on mutual empathy and respect. Art and the economy can also shake hands; but this is far from self-evident.

'Shaking hands' denotes some form of 'working together' or 'collaboration'. The difference between these terms is subtle, but striking.

Working together presupposes a certain distance. The artist thinks up and creates his work, while the entrepreneur helps him through some form of support. Or vice versa: the entrepreneur is involved in his company, and the artist helps him, for instance through some form of creative input. But beyond that, each party continues to do his own thing. And in working together, compromises are inevitable.

Collaboration, however, goes further. The artist and the entrepreneur jointly set up a project in which they think, create and implement on an equal footing. In this case, too, compromises will for the most part be necessary. In the next chapter we talk about collaboration, while in this chapter we focus mainly on working together. By way of illustration, an example that may seem bizarre at first sight: the way in which the Vooruit art centre in Ghent came into existence.

Just a building

A socialist cooperative may not be an enterprise, but it nevertheless had or has economic interests, be they simply the defence of the worker's financial interests. In the 1980s the Ghent socialist cooperative had a large, neglected and unworkable building, the Vooruit Feestlokaal (festival hall), which it initially planned to demolish. A new hotel or parking garage was to be built in its place. But a few socially and culturally conscious Ghent residents were able to persuade the cooperative to give them the chance to find a new use for the building.

Twenty years later, the Ghent Vooruit has become one of the most successful art centres in Belgium. It is an early example of the collaboration between the economy and art, with an indispensable financial support from the state. Would a hotel, let alone a parking garage, have been a profitable operation for this Ghent neighbourhood, located between the historic city centre and the university quarter? Those who took the initiative in this project took their starting point from a social and cultural consciousness and ended with professional management (see also chapter 2).

'If we had known in the early '80s that the definitive restoration of this property would end up costing ten million euro, we would probably never have dared take on this project. Fortunately we hadn't the faintest idea at the time and we jumped into the adventure in an impulsive manner. The property owner agreed to give us a year's time to develop our ideas. After a year, we would take another look at the situation.'

(Erik Temmerman, at the seminar 'Can creative talent be managed? Finding a balance between freedom and control')

Taking a stand

The key question here seems to be: can art and the economy get along, in such a way that art provides the economy with inspiration and creative insight, while the economy looks after the financial and material support for art? Perhaps the question needs to be split up into two subordinate parts. First, can art ever be profitable in economic terms? And secondly, is it possible for society to be based purely on economic principles, without any form of art that is not self-supporting?

To answer the first question is at once to take a stand. If you consider the 'Disney on Ice' show, or the ABBA musical 'Mamma Mia' or visual arts initiatives such as 'Art on Cows' or 'Horse Parade' to be art, then art can indeed be profitable. These are events in which the profit motive plays an essential, even primordial role.

As far as the second question is concerned: just about everyone in our society accepts that well-laid out and properly lit roads, a well-equipped army, an extensive educational network and other social services should be organised and financed by the state. We willingly pay for all these through our business and personal taxes. There is less consensus about certain other services, such as swimming pools, to cite but one example. Or sports centres. Or rubbish collection. Should the government invest in these services? Or should they be taken care of by the commercial sector? There is even less agreement regarding subsidies to art: why should a theatre performance, a classical concert, an art exhibit not be profitable through ticket sales, advertising, media rights, etc.? The economic sector can make its contribution to these, as is done in the United States, through sponsorship and patronage.

Quite a few of the participants in our seminars found that a collaboration between art and the economy, in which both retain their own respective identities, ought to be possible.

'I don't think that it is the responsibility of the business world to make art possible. I do look continually to form successful partnerships, to set up a collaboration with businesses which helps both of us improve. We have a number of collaborative ties with companies, but I do not approach this with the idea of: couldn't you throw some of your money our way? If a technology firm has something in house that we could also make use of, then I say to my people: we don't need to go to the House of the Future to see these applications. We can also apply them right here. And then you go and sit around a table with the directors of such a firm, with the idea that we can do something for each other. In this way you create a partnership in which a company is not responsible for artistic production, but can go along with a year-long collaboration.'

(Erik Temmerman)

This way of thinking and working has lead to a 'working together' between economic and cultural players, which have seen to it that our example, that of the Vooruit in Ghent, has become a successful cultural centre.

A good relationship between an artist and his gallery owner, on the other hand, can more accurately be described as 'collaboration'. For both are working on the same project. The painter Luc Tuymans and his gallery owner Frank Demaegd are a good example. In a period of about twenty years, they have laid out a successful trajectory in which neither the artistic nor the economic aspect suffered any disadvantage. The artist did not compromise his creativity, and

the gallery owner was able to develop the value of the work to the full.

'We have a good relationship. By working with me, Frank was able to break into the United States market as well, and he has become an international gallery owner. As an entrepreneur, he naturally earns money in this way – and so do I, actually. We need the art market, otherwise we would not survive. The most important thing is to be able to work with others on the basis of mutual trust. And it is also important that there is no intervention as regards the contents. After Documenta IX by Jan Hoet, I was really afraid that others would get involved in the contents of my work, that I would be under such pressure that the integrity of my work would suffer as a result. Fortunately, we have been able to avoid this, and so this did not turn out to be the case.'

(Luc Tuymans, at the seminar 'Art and the economy have no pure criteria for success')

Cultural investment

A positive experience of the collaboration between art and the economy on the part of artists and entrepreneurs has historical antecedents. In the Modernist period, significant forms of such collaboration were already present. A good example is the foundation in 1919 of the Bauhaus movement in the Weimar Republic, thanks to the strong social conscience present in Germany at the time. Artists developed projects and entrepreneurs manufactured the products and brought them to the consumers. The Bauhaus was an institution where visual artists, craftspeople and architects were trained together and developed functional but also artistically significant design objects, intended primarily to give added value

to the lifestyle and comfort of less well-to-do citizens. The Bauhaus was first established in Weimar, with Walter Gropius as its first director. In 1925 it moved to Dessau and in 1932 to Berlin, where it was shut down the following year by the Nazi government.

A contemporary form of far-reaching collaboration between art and the economy is the Cittadellarte project by the Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto: an 'art city' near the Northern Italian town of Biella which also thinks and works along economic lines.

'As the word 'Citta' in the name Cittadellarte suggests, the Fondazzione Pistoletto is organised as a city. Cittadellarte literally means 'city of art' and the name gives a clear sense of its identity: art is at the centre. Art brings the residents together and attracts 'foreigners'. The layout of Cittadellarte has many gates. A true strategy for the optimal protection and defence of the city would try to keep the number of entrances to a minimum. The City of Art, by contrast, is open to everyone and seems to grow from the inside outwards in ever increasing circular movements. The Uffizi, the circular gates of the city, are the free spaces where art engages in a collaboration with political, economic, religious and scientific visitors and guests.'

(Art critic Charlotte Bonduel, in *Janus* 19, July 2005)

The Flemish Community would also like art and the economy to go hand in hand. In addition to the Arts Decree already mentioned, according to which artists and art institutions can receive state subsidies in order to be able to develop their creative talents and activities, in April 2006 a system of 'cultural industries' was put forward. This initiative treats art and the economy as entirely equal partners. The project has to do with cultural products that

have a potential economic return, and therefore are not eligible for recognition and subsidy under the Arts Decree. This includes such products as musicals, films, fashion, design and some aspects of the music and book industries.

The Flemish Community set up the Cultuurinvest (cultural investment) fund for these sectors, in which three ministries are involved: Culture, Finance, and Economy and Entrepreneurship. Organisations or businesses from the aforesaid sectors can submit an application to Cultuurinvest for funds. With the monies received, they can realise projects that they would not otherwise be able to get off the ground or which are inadequately financed. For these types of cultural projects are either too small or too risky to obtain financing through the normal economic channels (risk capital, loans, shares, etc.). Cultuurinvest is part of the Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen (PMV), which works on behalf of the Flemish regional government. PMV is an institution that stimulates the Flemish regional government's industrial policy. It does so in two different ways: either it takes on the role of an entrepreneur itself, if private initiative is not forthcoming, or it can lend a project a helping hand if the private capital investors do not come through.

The idea behind Cultuurinvest is based, among others, on the principle that simply subsidising artistic initiatives cannot continue endlessly, and that after all there are more than 100,000 people in Flanders employed in the cultural sector – according to the figures of the social security office there were 102,000 in 2002. Therefore the Flemish government wants to provide resources for improving the entrepreneurial climate in the cultural sector just as it does in other economic sectors.

The question thus arises to what extent this is about 'art' rather than about 'culture' and related concepts such as 'fashion' and 'lifestyle'. Is 'working together' or 'collaboration' between art and the economy not distorted by another player in the field, namely 'the market'? This question will be addressed in the following chapter.

'Within the area of commercial production of culture, one can and must be particularly inventive and creative, and certainly there are people working there who, with their capacity for work and their sensitivity, are able to produce good art. But the fact that they have to create and exhibit within another context – that their products have to 'work' for the consumer – turns them into designers rather than artists. Someone with a great sensitivity to language can, for instance, write poetry as well as think up publicity catchphrases. But his brilliant one-liners will never be poetry, whereas within literature he has the opportunity to write differently, and to produce work that inscribes itself into the repository of linguistic memory in a different manner. Naturally I can also be affected by the ready wit, poetic power or rhetorical virtuosity of an advertising slogan or clip. But these will never be poetry or art, unless I deconstruct their commercial nature and read them as poetry. But the way in which 'low culture' is transferred to 'high culture' does not obliterate the difference between the two – on the contrary. I find it extremely important to be able to work within the 'critical' context of art, and therefore art must have 'content'.'

(Bart Verschaffel, in conversation with art critic Charlotte Bonduel, *Janus* 17, 2004)

Failure

Finally, even in the idea of failure or bankruptcy there are parallels between art and the economy. Entrepreneurs know all too well what the terrible word 'bankrupt' means. It stands for a hell that must be avoided at all costs. The doomsday image of a fatal endpoint of a career, the negative image of the person who was unable to make a success of a venture plays an important role in Western European culture, much more so than, for instance, in the United States.

In the case of the artist as well, there is the fear of failure: will a work sell? Is this one stripe of paint the reason for the failure of the work? What is a bad work? One that is not beautiful, or one that does not get sold?

We have already said this in the first chapter: modern art is the culture of its own failures – time after time. The economy is the culture of 'always more and faster', the endpoint of which can never be reached. And therefore entrepreneurs seem eternally to be running after themselves and others. Art and the economy can help each other to recognise and get to the bottom of failure. Just as Andy Warhol did with the dollar bill. He drew it in order to show what the economy is all about: money. At the same time he made the banknote into a fetish that conceals the fact that in the end it is 'nothing', simply a means of exchange for other bills whose value in turn derives entirely from that image of 'one dollar'. A value based upon a standard, or perhaps even upon a lie that everyone reluctantly believes.

'The economy must deal reasonably with art, and art must deal reasonably with the economy. Reasonable here means being critical, and above all self-critical. Art, of course, is that lucrative element that allows eve-

ryone who is economically successful to exhibit the splendour and sovereignty of that success. That was true in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, when the Medicis hitched the top artists of their day to their glorious carriage and thus made possible an art that to this day makes our jaws drop. But the Medicis of today also have the opportunity – and must also seize this opportunity – to allow modern artists to fulfil their modern role. That means that they must pay them to depict the shortcomings inherent in that kind of payment. And that can only happen not by celebrating the priceless nature of art, but by illustrating how art falls short of depicting the shortcomings of those who pay for it – or indeed the shortcomings of such payment in general.'

(Marc De Kesel, at the seminar 'The taboo of failure')

Conclusion

Art and the economy can shake hands, in a form of 'working together' or 'collaboration'.

The Espeel case, described in the following entracte, can exemplify this relationship. The West Flemish company Constructies Espeel has since 1989 been forming collaborative ties with artists. It takes upon itself the technical study and production of these artists' works. The goal is to create a win-win situation for the company as well as for the artists. From a study of the Sociology Research Group in the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Ghent, led by Professor J. Vincke, it seems that the win-win situation, with a few nuances, really does exist.

Entracte 5
It's about the artists, not the art or the work!

The art of industry or the industry of art?
On the collaborative ties between Constructies Espeel and artists.

Nowadays only a few of those who know Constructies Espeel can imagine the company without the collaborative ties that it began in 1989 with (visual) artists. Those connections are expressed primarily in the study and production of works by artists such as Paul Gees, Honoré d'O, Leo Copers, Isa Genzken, Herman(n) Mai(ei)er Neustadt, Ann-Veronica Janssens, Jan Fabre, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Hans Depelsmacker, Martine Platteau and Claire Roudenko-Bertin. Their aim is to create a win-win situation for the company as well as for the artists. For the artists, the added value is obvious: whoever is selected by Espeel based on the potential for collaboration, can make use of the material, the space and the professionalism of the company in order to work out ideas without any interference with the intellectual property rights of the artist.

What about the added value for the company, and beyond that, for the firm's employees? Is working with art of benefit to Espeel itself? Does the collaboration influence the organisational culture, the motivation of the employees, their commitment to their work? And can each economic unit – within a broader framework – fit into the art world? Can each organisational culture be the breeding ground for a collaborative project with artists? The Sociology Working Group of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Ghent devoted a study to the Espeel case in 2004.

Art and the economy can go hand in hand perfectly well, the study shows, and this is not meant only in terms of a positive result for promotion and name-recognition, but also with regard to the effect on the members of the company.

Can one generalise these results and extrapolate from them to other businesses? It is possible, but far from certain. The organisational culture of Espeel seems to be a fertile soil for this sort of project, but the collaboration has been going on for so long now that the situation at the beginning can no longer be reconstructed, and the influence of the art project on the organisational culture cannot therefore really be assessed. What we also do not know is what type of company would match the same sort of effect with this type of collaborative project. The study is and remains a case study.

Organisational culture and work ethic at Constructies Espeel

If we want to know the effect of this art project on the company, we first have to understand how Espeel works as an organisation.

Constructies Espeel is characterised by a flat corporate culture, task-oriented and with person-oriented features. The company employs 70 people and works in a results-oriented manner, in which the quality of the products is emphasised over the quantity. That is in itself one of the possible reasons why an art project can flourish here. The company tailors its products to the customer. Responding rapidly to the market is made possible by constantly keeping abreast of technological developments. Despite the motto that customer satisfaction is the chief goal, the needs and inter-

ests of the employees are also treated as important. Flexibility goes before strict rules.

The magic word is 'collaboration': the emphasis is on an open communication structure, both among employees themselves and between management and employees. There is little room for ego trippers. In addition to generating profit and bringing in revenue, attention is also paid to the development and job satisfaction of the employees, and to fostering creativity and innovation. Naturally the employees are there first and foremost to earn a living. But as an extra, four out of every ten employees opt for bonuses instead of art objects, sporting activities or excursions. But there are opportunities for relaxation within work as well. The employees are proud of being able to work for Espeel. Hardly anyone ever quits.

'Trust' is a second keyword: management has confidence in the employees' capacities, and vice versa. 'Atmosphere' – in the positive sense of collaboration and trust – is very important.

How is art experienced at Espeel?

The entrepreneur and his artist partner adopt an 'aesthetic attitude'. This means that they view the art object as an end in itself: what they care about is the quality of the work of art, and the intensity and enduring nature of the artistic experience.

By contrast, employees view works of art more from a non-aesthetic perspective: the meaning of a work of art for them is determined primarily by associations, for example by the recollections that it summons up, by its material composition, and so on.

Art does not occupy a central role in the lives of most of the employees. Almost 40 per cent of them do not consider that the

idea of an artwork is more important than its concrete realisation. Art appears to them to serve primarily to provide an attractive and realistic reflection of reality. But nevertheless, they are not negative towards contemporary and more conceptual art: only 7.5 per cent of the employees find contemporary art to be much ado about nothing.

How is the production process, from idea to work of art, perceived?

The experience of the process leading from an idea to a product finds expression in the responses given to the questions raised by the enquiry:

- How does the company fit into the art world?
- What consequences does this have for Espeel?
- And how do Espeel and the work of art influence each other?

A few initial figures can help interpret the results that follow:

- Two-thirds of the employees say they have rarely or never worked for an artist.
- The majority of the employees are indifferent in this regard: 'live and let live' is their motto. Thus they have a passive attitude.
- One out of every seven works a lot to very much on the project. Those who work on it also know more about the art project; in other words, there is a positive correlation between knowledge and participation.

- One fourth of all the employees would like to be more involved in the project.
- Two out of three say they are positively disposed toward the project and support it: loyalty to the firm is thus high.

Is bringing art into the company an added value for Constructies Espeel?

The employees do not feel 'different' as a result of the project, they are neither more nor less interested in art as a result. The project does, however, bring positive media attention with it, which helps inspire involvement and motivation.

The other side of the coin is that the employees sometimes have the feeling that the production apart from the art does not get enough attention, for they are proud of *all* their products. For instance, the video screens in Madonna's and Britney Spears' shows are also made by Espeel. These products have a high 'sex appeal' and the whole company is proud of playing a small role in the world of the pop stars. Moreover, not everyone at the company works with the art projects, while they too produce objects that likewise require great technical skill. Here and there one hears that these things get a little bit less recognition. Is this perception or reality?

The participants understand that the artist is nothing without them, and that there are aspects of the artwork about which the artist himself hasn't got a clue. That leads once again to involvement. Experienced artists adapt to the agreements with the technical staff, while the inexperienced (young) artists do that a lot less or not at all, which can cause tensions that can endanger the economic efficiency.

Does the project bring with it a broadening of the participants' vision of the world, since it exposes them to other ways of seeing? In other words, does their worldview expand, is there more openness as a result?

The contact with the artist himself is the best part of the project, many of them say. They look forward to that contact, and this is true not only of those who work directly with the artists. In this way, the economic and the artistic world become intensely involved with each other, views are shared and a new interpretive paradigm can emerge that broadens the worldview of the members of the organisation. In this way, the routine can be interrupted, a number of employees point out.

Although employees are not terribly interested in art, by means of the art projects they become part of the art world. The *why* of a work of art comes from the artist, and the *how* is added on by the employees. The collaborative project breaks through the tendency to take one's own expertise for granted. That is true for those who are directly involved, but also for other members of the firm who are not directly concerned with the execution of an artwork.

The presence of the artistic field – through the social contacts with artists – thus allows the employees to see another world and gives them a chance to hear other perspectives. The collaborative project appears to foster openness towards the wider world. It also provides for variety at work and a sense of pride. A side effect of the art project is that it contributes to the name recognition of the company.

Must it be art?

In other words, is the value added by the art project really so unique, and can other activities not yield the same effect?

Only 1 out of every 16 employees ranks the creation of works of art first in the category of 'motivation'. They prefer extra bonuses (1 out of 3!), sports activities and excursions. But for the majority of them, it does not really make a difference what the motivation is. But it is true that no one finds the art projects to be a disincentive. Employees find the challenge to their expertise exciting, it makes for a change of pace and is less boring.

Other activities besides art projects can also make for pride and variety at work. Espeel can keep the members of the company alert without the art project.

But there are differences nonetheless. The tendency to take one's own competences for granted, and the dominant worldview with all its daily tasks and routines are broken through. The worldview becomes larger, and there are added values that seem specific to the experience of fitting the artistic field into the economic one. Activities that fall outside the work process, such as sport or excursions, do not make use of the employees' professional competences, and therefore those activities do not break through those self-evidences.

We cannot, however, assume from this that other projects that also involve applying professional skills outside the production process would not also be possible. This kind of added value may well be possible to achieve with more popular cultural products as well.

It seems that the art project, precisely because it remains a side project and thus is not undertaken for the sake of economic gain, offers room for employee development.

To what extent do organisational culture and the art project influence each other?

Collaboration is important in and of itself, according to the vision of Espeel, as we have seen. Hence this collaborative project strengthens the organisational culture.

Yet we should not try to idealise the situation: the employees continue primarily to engage in productive work. The art project interrupts that to a certain extent because the engineers do not get involved, unless it be to think together about the steps required to move from the idea to the object.

Espeel places quality over quantity, both in its selection of customers and artists and in the production process. It delivers customised work, which is more than simply putting together the largest amount of product in the shortest possible time. Nevertheless, being involved with the art project also brings pressures with it: the other orders have to be ready, thus reducing the pleasure of working on the artwork.

At Espeel there is, in any case, enough variety in the 'ordinary' work, since the customers are so diverse. The employees do not see themselves as assembly-line workers. The art project provides, for some of them, an additional change of pace.

The reason to participate seems to lie not so much in the interest in art, but in the desire for such change.

Is participation in the artwork then a synonym with 'being successful as an employee at Espeel'? This is not how the employees see it. It is indeed a form of recognition, but one that does not cause any jealousy. Moreover, they are not deliberately chosen for the project.

The art project helps employees learn to use their capacities in a different way. The presence of artists was thus found indirectly to be enriching.

Although this was not the explicit purpose, Espeel also receives additional exposure through the project. It forms an image of a company that is not focused solely on economic factors.

The project leads to a sort of pride in relation to the outside world. Work thus contributes to social status, but the project generally speaking also creates added value for society through the foundation of the non-profit organisation Arteconomy. One may doubt, however, whether the employees experience the art project as a transcendence of individual interests, since they generally do not regard the artworks as art and are indifferent to the project.

The causality of the relationship between art and organisational culture is difficult to identify. Yet they seem to have an effect on each other, to give each other space and reinforce each other. The values that Espeel propagates and the way in which the company is organised are, on the one hand, expressed through the collaborative project, and on the other hand, they form a fertile soil for nurturing similar collaborative projects.

Based on the data collected about the Espeel case, it seems that the introduction of art projects can be an excellent basis for fostering creativity and innovation in an enterprise.

Case study by the sociology working group at the university of Ghent, led by prof. J. Vincke

CHAPTER 5

ART AND THE ECONOMY: PARTS OF A GREATER WHOLE BEYOND THE SIMPLISTIC DIVISION BETWEEN THEM

Until now we have been talking primarily about art and the economy as two worlds, each with a certain uniqueness and with a specific relationship or contrast with the other. But is this approach sufficient? In one of the seminars, Marc Jacobs presented the book *De la justification. Les Économies de la grandeur* [On justification. The economies of greatness] (1991) by the French social scientists Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot. The book takes a much more nuanced perspective than the dualism of art and the economy.

Luc Boltanski is a sociologist and professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, one of the top universities in Paris. Earlier in life he was a direct collaborator of the famous French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who died a few years ago. Boltanski became known for his history of company executives (in French, 'cadres'). He investigated where the category of 'executive' comes from and how it came into existence in France. Laurent Thévenot is an economics professor at the same university. He was previously the head of the French statistical services.

A new theory

The book *De la justification. Les Économies de la grandeur* is regarded as a key work within the social sciences, but is not as well known outside of France and certainly not among the general public. It is a long, rich and brilliant book consisting of several layers, and is far from an easy read. It has had a major influence over the past fifteen years in France, in the fields of sociology, economics, political science and history.

In their book, Boltanski and Thévenot try to detach themselves from the influence of Bourdieu and to construct their own model. That was not an easy thing to do at the end of the '80s, in the era

of postmodernism, of the end of grand narratives and the clearing away of the influence of Marxist thought. They were among the few who dared at that time to come forward with a grand theory. As they indicate in their introduction, they were trying in this way to combine various theories: on the one hand the work of Bourdieu, but on the other hand also the theories of Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and others. Latour is known for his study of science and technology. He considers science as a form of tribal conflict or even war, in which each tries to win the other over. On this subject he developed a very appealing, shamelessly sharp theory of power. To combine Bourdieu and Latour is almost like trying to combine fire and water. That was in any case what the two scientific gods themselves thought, but their grown-up disciples fortunately did not.

People who dared to speak up against scientists who peered over the walls and began to discuss seemingly self-evident truths when this was (truly) necessary, this is what we wish once again to address here.

How did Boltanski and Thévenot come up with *De la justification*? The statistician Thévenot noted that when he tried via surveys to divide up populations into socio-professional categories, many of those questioned protested. They said: 'You are putting me into this category, but that does not represent me at all. You say that I do certain things, but that does not correspond in any way to reality.'

Boltanski had assembled a large collection of stories through his study of executives, including accounts of missed promotions, or of all sorts of power techniques used in businesses. He could not fit these stories into his theoretical model. He was also interested in letters to the editors that had appeared, for instance, in

Le Monde. He asked questions such as: what do people complain about, and how do they go about doing so? Boltanski and Thévenot thus also looked into how people argue: how do they reach an agreement? How do they coordinate it all?

They researched various forms of polemic, from discussions and heated arguments between, for instance, managers or political philosophers. And they uncovered patterns in these exchanges.

Six main models

Thus these scholars came up with a very striking and daring thesis. In their view, there are six principal models or worlds that can be distilled out of these sorts of arguments. They dubbed the six main models 'cités', translated as 'commonwealths'. A commonwealth is a certain repertoire of arguments: a purified and interconnected series of principles. They based their analyses on situations in which people interact with each other. All sorts of situations seem to a certain degree to be orchestrated and organised, in such a way that the potential behaviour is curtailed.

Boltanski and Thévenot give the example of a director who wants to fire someone. He has statistics, balance sheets and figures at his fingertips, and says: 'Look, the turnover has seriously dropped this year. If we look at these figures – you see these statistics here – then I am afraid that we have to let you go.' The context in which the employee is confronted, the impressive office and the stiff suit, the computers, the statistics... he can scarcely argue with it all. But what does the guy do? He suddenly changes the context, or what is more, the register of the argument. He points to the photo of the director's family that is on his desk, and says: 'I've also got chil-

dren.' By appealing to another world and shifting the discussion from the world of industry to the domestic sphere, he mobilises a different form of argument, another register, but also a different scale of values and methods of judgment. How can you compare fathers, or a home?

With the commonwealth model of Boltanski and Thévenot, you can divide people into different groups based on differing categories of grandeur, greatness or size, that are typical of a commonwealth.

One of the axioms is that people, or members of such a commonwealth, are equal. A second characteristic is that several ranks or 'estates' can be differentiated. And a third characteristic is that the estates are accessible to everyone, just as in elections: in theory everyone can run as a candidate and be elected.

There is a hierarchy in such a commonwealth. The higher you rise, the more you have to invest or sacrifice. If, for instance, you enter the world of fame or renown, you have to surrender part of your privacy. Finally, the authors state that the greatness of the great works to the advantage of the smaller ones. The more powerful the patron, the better things are for his client. The better the company manager, the better it will be for the shareholders and the employees who work there, for instance because they will have greater security.

What, then, are the six models?
The first is the commonwealth of **inspiration**. This would seem to suggest the world of art, of which the basic principle is 'grace', inspired by the work of the Church Father St. Augustine. Inspiration is something that is out of your hands, for grace or inspira-

tion comes to you suddenly. You have to be open to it, and at the moment you receive it you become capable of certain things.

A second model is that of 'the house', of **nearness**. Think, for instance, of all the different forms of patronage or of the princely courts of the *ancien régime*, where the close bond with 'the house' was crucial.

The third commonwealth is that of opinion, or **fame**.

The fourth is that of **citizenship** or the general will, inspired by the political theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The fifth is that of the **market**, where competition is the central concept and Adam Smith the guru.

And the sixth is that of **industry**, of efficiency.

Keys

To describe the six models, or six different worlds, took Boltanski and Thévenot sixty pages, filled to the brim with keywords and key figures to be used as a reading grid for analysing situations. Around each pure commonwealth an entire world grew up in the course of time, an extended repertoire of words, signs and connections.

The same is true, for instance, of 'the domestic world', the world of the house, where the principles of tradition, generation and hierarchy play an important role. Here the major figures are the fathers and forefathers, the noble title is crucial, the direct networks are what matter, and you have to show yourself to be subservient. Other keywords in this sphere are: respect, responsibility, authority. The verbs that fit here are: educate, recommend, thank, respect. Important figures include the house, the milieu, the cus-

toms. A significant test in this world is that of the family gathering, where all these values are tested out.

In the world of fame or opinion, the point of reference is the general public, that is, other people. Successful people, stars, local celebrities are the key figures. What is of importance within this world? Campaigns, the press, PR, mailings, decors. What investment do you need to make? You have to give up your privacy and be ready to stand in the limelight as much as possible.

The worlds of inspiration, the market and industry

The most relevant models for our book are the worlds of inspiration, of the market and of industry. The most important principle in the first is that of inspiration, of grace. In the world of the market, it is competition: the race to be the most, the first, to set the prices and to sell, to make profit. In the industrial world, it is all about 'performance' and efficiency.

Who is important in these worlds?
In the world of inspiration, it is anyone who is bizarre, spontaneous, unusual, disturbing, beautiful. In the world of the market, it is someone who has succeeded, a millionaire, a winner, someone who has managed to let the money roll in. In the industrial world it is someone effective, functional, reliable, practical or who is able to get others to work together in these ways.

These categories are totally different from each other, each with its own measures and sense of what is relevant, what really counts. Important figures in the world of inspiration are: the artist, but also the madman, an enlightened soul or a believer in a state of grace. In the world of the market: a businessman, salespeople, competi-

tors. In that of industry: experts, professionals. In the world of inspiration, dreams and the unconscious are essential, while in the world of the market it is wealth and luxury objects that matter, and in the industrial world it is machines, methods, timetables, schemas, series, norms.

Where do you need to make an investment within these worlds?
In the world of inspiration, you invest in escaping from habits and continuity. You dare to subject certain matters to discussion, to take risks, to discover detours. In the world of the market it is all about opportunism. If an opportunity presents itself, you have to be able to seize it. You have to go for the gap in the market and if necessary to create one. You have to distance yourself from your emotions in time, in order to clinch a deal. In the industrial world you invest in dynamism and progress, in heading straight for the goal.

As far as relationships are concerned, the world of inspiration is about the alchemy of unforeseen encounters, creating, discovering, dreaming, letting things 'explode'. In the world of the market, the key elements are awakening interest and obtaining, buying, selling, negotiating, paying. In the industrial world relationships turn on organising, functioning, implementing, standardising.

What is the test to be applied in each of these worlds?
In the world of inspiration, it is primarily adventure, experience, a mental journey. In the world of the market it is a closed deal, one that is 'in the pocket'. In the world of industry, the product that is launched, that works, that is realised.

In the world of the market, the most important standard is money, while in industry it is measurement, size, and in the world of inspiration it is images, impressions, intuitive sensations.

These are clusters of concepts that go together. Boltanski and Thévenot claim that people generally draw their arguments from these six models. They try to organise situations in such a way that they can get quite far with one of these models. In this way they legitimate their activities, and show that they have done their homework, should anyone call that into question.

Then there are the various compromises. These arise only if a discussion escalates or if people want to avoid debate by finding a combination that each party can live with. You can arrive at a compromise if various people agree to settle the matter, to create a win-win situation without reaching a confrontation in any one of these spheres. People draw upon elements of various 'commonwealths' and are willing not to build up their argumentation in any one particular world, but to look for a *modus vivendi*, a common interest. Boltanski and Thévenot argue that such compromises are fragile and less strong, less convincing than when you are able to reach a decision, an agreement within one of the six models or commonwealths.

Two is too few

Boltanski and Thévenot demonstrate – and this is essential for our book – that you cannot automatically assume that art and the economy are in opposition. For according to their argument, there are

two models that belong to the economy: on the one hand the world of the market, in which competition is central, and on the other hand the industrial world, where what counts is efficiency and the ability to produce certain things within a given period.

Moreover, and this is where they begin their book, they show how these models can be identified in the underlying structures of sciences such as economics or sociology, and particularly in the rise of these social sciences. The perspective that scientists have on such questions is strongly marked by these basic models, which have become blind spots and continue to play tricks on us today.

Boltanski and Thévenot also show how criticism of other worlds can be expressed from the point of view of these six worlds, and what forms this criticism can take. What is relevant for our debate is the criticism of the world of the market from the perspective of the world of inspiration, which is closely linked to art.

What must we do in the world of inspiration? Do we have to try to be open to inspiration and to be as free as possible from all forms of commitment, of ballast? Money is clearly a form of ballast, since it leads to dependency, and because we are constantly having to satisfy all sorts of needs as we strive for luxury. The classical critique from the world of inspiration with regard to the market is that the two worlds cannot go together and that the world of the market must be excluded as much as possible. That the essence is not about making money and that true art is not measurable in money. What is essential cannot ultimately be learned or bought, you simply have to have it or see it, as if in a 'state of grace'. All sorts of compromise are possible, but they are hard to make and are harshly criticised.

Criticism is also directed at the world of industry. There is resistance to the emphasis on predictability and reproducibility, on copying and planning. From the perspective of inspiration, people try precisely to free themselves from routine, from habits, from safety. The flash of genius, that is what matters.

But there is naturally criticism also from the world of the market directed at the worlds of inspiration and of industry. The world of the market seems certainly to be interested in that of inspiration, not only because the products of that world can be transposed into money or investment opportunities, but also because they both have to do with longings and passions. But what is typical of the market is that these longings are motivated above all by external objects and factors, and much less by internal factors. There is also interest in emotion as a lubricant with which to prompt people to buy – the domain of marketing. But a true businessman must, if push comes to shove, be able to set aside his emotions and go for the profit and the sale. He must if necessary be able to put on a show. Eye-openers are welcome in the world of the market, not because they can expand or deepen the viewers' minds, but mainly because they ensure that the customer notices the product and purchases it.

One criticism by the world of the market regarding the world of industry is that the latter is far too rigid. The industrial world works with systems, organisational charts, structures. And in the world of the market, the entrepreneur must, in order to remain flexible, be able to take a proper distance from all forms of bureaucracy.

And finally there is the criticism by the world of industry of that of inspiration. The industrial world has a hard time with what is unforeseen. It is strongly oriented toward the future and has problems with the fact that people tend to take unpredictable actions,

the fact that you cannot count on them, either literally or figuratively.

Compromises

What sorts of compromises do the world of the market and the world of inspiration conclude? The two do not seem completely incompatible. All sorts of intermediary forms are possible. If people buy something, they often say: 'We are doing something crazy, we are going to buy something far too expensive, we are spending too much money.' This kind of statement belongs in the world of inspiration. Compromises with the world of industry can be found, for instance, in a combination of energy – an important concept in the industrial world – and passion. This combination can lead to various forms of creativity. A good example of this is brainstorming, a method that is used in business circles and that has to do with the world of inspiration.

Boltanski and Thévenot emphasise that, if it comes right down to it, if people are involved in a real battle of words and find themselves having to defend themselves like a cornered cat, compromises seem to be weaker than in the commonwealth models. The most important message they want to convey is that a plurality of worlds exists that cannot be reduced or subordinated to each other. And neither does one have to yield to the other. One such world, like the market, for instance, does not entirely determine the other. Hence the liberating effect of these models, among others, as opposed to Marxism and other –isms. One science, such as economics, cannot explain everything, but instead an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. Holism, for instance, is an interesting starting point, if you acknowledge that there are various 'wholes' –

worlds. It depends ultimately on the situation and above all on the players involved. Moreover, over the course of history new commonwealths have emerged from time to time and new compromises have been attempted.

If we do not see any difference between the economy and art, then we want a win-win situation, a lasting relationship between two domains that reinforce each other without allowing the uniqueness of either to suffer. But that is a weak compromise. You opt for such a compromise by not arguing or thinking things through. If you do, for instance with the argumentation grid proposed by Boltanski and Thévenot, then you will notice that there are indeed major structural differences between the economy and art. In the end, a potential collaboration depends on the situation and the willingness to accept and successfully deal with the plurality of the two worlds.[1]

Conclusion

The book by Boltanski and Thévenot called and calls forth many different reactions, witness the citations from a few of the participants:

1 See L. Boltanski and L. Thévenot, *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); M. Jacobs, 'Actornetwerk. Geschiedenis, sociale wetenschappen. De nieuwe Annales en het werk van Boltanski et Thévenot,' *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 22 (1996), pp. 260-289. The most recent synthesis, fifteen years later, is L. Thévenot, *L'action au pluriel. Sociologie des régimes d'engagement* (Paris: La découverte, 2006).

'Are we not forever at loggerheads, since everything always intersects? Or are there worlds with long-lasting compromises?'

'Can an artist make compromises? If he does so, he weakens his art.'

'Let the artist be who he is, let him keep his own parameters: inexpressible, disturbing, passionate. If he uses different parameters, those of fame, money and so on, then he devotes himself to another domain, outside of art.'

Compromise appears more and more often. No longer just between art and the economy, or between art, the market and industry, but between all 'commonwealths'. It seems as if compromises are unavoidable, if we are to enter into collaboration. But are these temporary compromises, depending on the circumstances, following the wishes of the client, or are they enduring, strategic compromises?

The point of departure for the seminars and for this book – achieving a balanced collaboration between art and the economy – is a theme that is in full development. We cannot yet give definitive answers. But it is becoming increasingly clear that, both among artists and among entrepreneurs, the need and the will are there to reach a long-lasting compromise.

'There are various worlds that stand on their own, separate from each other. Each of these worlds strives to legitimate itself. The worlds exist only because the other worlds exist. There is a power struggle among the various worlds, and because the worlds are populated by entities, conflicts arise. The different worlds try to persuade each other. But our own survival, and that of our people, our culture, are more important

than their degeneration through a possible conflict that might get out of hand. To make possible the survival of these worlds, compromises have to be made. This is what I would like to call win-win situations.

Making a compromise *also has a more positive meaning. Because the will is there to step out of a conflictual situation. To* compromise *oneself (the word has the same root) usually has quite a negative sense, for it presupposes letting go of one's individuality, attainments, convictions, in order to accept a standpoint that lies in one's opponent's camp.*

Entering into a compromise is legitimate, for in the end there is an agreement. To compromise oneself is not legitimate, for it is to be disloyal.'

(A participant)

In the following entracte, entrepreneur Tim Vannieuwenhuysen goes more extensively into the positions of Boltanski and Thévenot.

Entracte 6
Art and the economy: hopefully we will continue to see a difference

The world is much easier if everything stays in its own subworld. But the world is also much more monotone if everything stays put in its own compartment. The world falls still if no one looks beyond the borders of his own little world.

From the perspective of a holistic view and convinced of the power of the world of corporate success and the free market, looking at art is a complex mental process.

I notice that in searching for equilibrium, for proper relationships or useful links, one is mostly looking for the largest common denominator: to what extent are we on the same page? Up to what point do we understand each other?

We forget that flagrant disagreement, unattainable dreams about the other, envy or disdain for each other are also important in themselves, for they lead us to the point where we engage in a discussion of our own world from an unfamiliar perspective.

Inspired by the theory of Boltanski and Thévenot, I was able to find good foundations in their work for my quest as a 'greenhorn' in the field of art. It was a strange or surprising observation that in designing our seminars we had been implicitly applying the theories of Boltanski and Thévenot, albeit without fully understanding them.

The model is static and starts out from a theoretical, ideal image. Yet this model can help explain quite a few dynamics.

Boltanski and Thévenot distinguish six different worlds, or 'cités'. Six worlds that each strive for peace, for a complete withdrawal into oneself, preferably without interaction with the other worlds. But this peace is restless and unsettled. We are influenced actively and reactively by the other worlds, and we influence these ourselves as well, both consciously and unconsciously. And a good thing too.

Our interest is aroused above all by the apparently insuperable difference between inspiration (art) and the market (the economy). Just as impressive, and often overlooked, is the contrast between the world of the market and that of industry. Is that not something we experience daily in our companies, where salespeople – the most marketable – come into conflict with engineers – the most ingenious – and seem not to understand each other?

Each person can choose which world he will dwell in, although you might well ask whether we truly have an individual choice. But we can also step into a different world in the twinkling of an eye, and can try to stand within or between two different worlds. As long as someone is an entrepreneur from 8 till 5, a father from 5 till 8, and an art lover on the weekend, there is of course no problem. But there are few lives that can be divided into time periods in this way, and in any case the accompanying thoughts certainly cannot be. That is what makes communication so unclear.

Two words are key here: compromise and conflict. It is in our nature to seek compromises where we have the impression that we are close to each other, and to look for conflicts on crucial points.

This theory also explains why in our companies we so often have trouble organising a brainstorming session, recording know-how,

managing creativity and directing R&D departments. For our market or efficiency standards are no longer applicable. The world of the artist can teach us, from its own perspective, that of the art world, to follow things up, honour them, plan for them…

But if such study initiatives lead to one great compromise – art and the economy: we see no difference – then we miss our goal entirely and the consequences are baleful.

I see economic and personal progress in the continuous follow-up of momentary balances, fragile temporary compromises, tough conflicts, love-hate relationships, attraction and repulsion, like the dynamic between two planetary bodies. Striving for an endpoint, a goal, while knowing that it does not exist and is not desirable.

Many an entrepreneur goes into art purely out of market-oriented thinking. The vocabulary, the success factors, the parameters, the points of comparison, and so on, come from the market. Art is treated like a share, with risks and potential returns. For entrepreneurs, an artist or an artwork is worth what the market is willing to pay for it.

An entrepreneur could also seek out what independence, external creativity, obstinacy and a critical sense can mean for him and/or his company, apart from the 'marketable' work of art. Only a few people are capable of making this mental step, myself included.

To opt exclusively for market value is neither good not bad, but it is evident that the artist rejects this completely, or else will behave in a market-driven manner himself, which might mean painting whatever people are willing to pay for.

If the artist takes the second of the above options, that will be at the expense of his creativity, his autonomy from his 'paymaster', surrendering his nerve and his daring, in short, his freedom. If instead he resolutely chooses the other option, and perhaps makes unsaleable art, he is also dependent, for instance upon subsidies from the state.

Fortunately, the various parties tend in the first instance to choose, out of self-respect and pride, their own world with its own qualitative demands and preconditions, and they look for short-term compromises – sometimes seen as a 'necessary evil', which need not, in any case, be regarded as a bad thing.

Our society teaches us to argue and settle disputes by finding the one correct position or reaching the best solution. From Boltanski and Thévenot, and from the seminar series, I learned that on so many levels there is no best option that is equally valid across all perspectives or 'commonwealths'. It is useful to be able to unmask an argument if it does not meet the conditions of the world in which you are located. For many discussions and arguments are irrelevant to this account.

I note that this theory is equally applicable to a number of other social discussions: the male-female relationship, multiculturalism, a healthy relationship between education and business life, and the social economy, a politics of service...

Terribly enriching and inspiring. And terribly complicating.

Tim Vannieuwenhuysen

Conclusion

So here we are. We can no longer view art and the economy as static contrasts, a dichotomy or a harmony. The previous chapters clearly illustrate that neither art nor the economy is an entity unto itself. They are part of a larger whole, in which every element is related. When an employee at a printing shop in Brussels took a discarded print of a work by Joëlle Tuerlinckx out of the waste paper bin and framed it, raising it to the level of a work of art, something was happening. Compartmentalisation is no longer an issue.

'Then there is always that amazing moment, which sometimes comes much later. In this case, I returned to the printer's to look for some famous palettes with problematic papers and some unwanted sheets and I was very surprised to discover a large page, known as a 'quaternion', framed in the hallway near the main entrance. This is a sheet of paper used as a base on which catalogue pages are printed, and when I saw it there, on display with the worker's fingerprints still visible, I asked: 'What is this?' I was astonished, and I thought at first that it was a new piece of art the firm had acquired. I was told: 'An employee who prints the images thought of you and at the last minute he decided to keep the paper'. He said: 'Voilà, it's a Joëlle Tuerlinckx!' And they framed it'.

(Joëlle Tuerlinckx, at the seminar, 'Art in harmony with company objectives')

People

Throughout the process of mutual attraction and repulsion, of working together and cooperating in a world much larger than just that of art and the economy, people play a central role: the artist, the entrepreneur, but also the employee in the company. They have the unique command of freedom, creativity and engagement to set up a workable relationship between art and the economy. The focus of art has shifted; as Bart Verschaffel would say, creativity is in itself no longer an artistic value.

'If you want to be understood, you shouldn't make art. Creating art is always investing a part of yourself in a work that you then put forward and someone takes from you. The Belgian visual artist Jan Vercruysse commented on this: 'The artist loses his work to the world.' The interpretation, the critical response take the work along and bring it somewhere else, to other lives and desires and forms of sensibility, in which the artist often does not recognize himself. But that is what it means to 'rescue' a work. A work or œuvre that remains under the glass bell of the artist's control and individual sensibility, with only occasional admiration, dies off. Admiration has no impact, but interpretation and criticism take the work away. They bring it into contact with other lives and places and give it a chance in the world.'

(Bart Verschaffel, in conversation with Charlotte Bonduel, *Janus* 17, 2004)

The 'other lives and places' refer to the entrepreneur, the economy, as well as to all the other people, places and the public at large within our society. The notion that 'the artist loses his work to the environment' can also be translated, with a sense of nuance, as 'the entrepreneur loses his product to the world'. In that sense the

five types of relationships between art and the economy discussed in this book are extended to all facets of our society. They must interact amongst each other, from conflict to compromise, to reach a more refined interface. That is a task entrusted to people, and no one else can do it.

Time

Today art has also become critical in a reflective way. Art can provide new insights, not only on the level of creativity and of sociological, political and philosophical criticism, but also on the level of an important dimension: time. Time can also be experienced in different ways.

The concept of 'time' in the economy is one of speed – of processes and production, deadlines, being the first, working hours. It is primarily an objectively measurable, quantitative time. Time in art, by contrast, is one of inertia, reflection, letting ideas sink in. It is primarily a subjectively measurable, qualitative time.

In all senses of the word, time is a binding agent, not only between art and the economy but also among all segments of our society. Time can be used as a 'delaying' element that invites reflection and contemplation. The question arises: is the economy today in need of a deceleration?

In an interplay of the (f)actors, people and time, the right situations can be created to encourage reflection on the relationship with art in our society and on the interaction between our society and art.

Where do we go from here?

'We are changed! This thinking and feeling has changed us. Little by little we are making contacts with the outside world that radically influence our internal world. Our thoughts and emotions are stimulated by art, our creativity is sharpened, as is our ethical and aesthetic study of the world. As soon as you are captivated by a passion for art, art becomes a part of you; it becomes part of your life'.

(A participant)

Let's return once again to our starting point: the relationship between art and the economy. Does the artist become a creative consultant in the company? Does the entrepreneur put together a private collection or does he in fact build an art collection at the company together with its employees?

These may be steps in the right direction. But ultimately the contact has to go deeper and much further in the direction of a spectacular organic cooperation between art and the economy, a cooperation on a societal project in which all parties are equal. In an increasingly chaotic world, there is a need for such projects to give meaning and direction.

'At this point, with our heightened sensitivity we can no longer accept the purely materialistic approach of our society and surroundings, because we know there is more to life. The world has suddenly become bigger; it has taken on a whole new dimension. We are in the midst of this world with our company and our business affairs. Because we participate in the economy, we are contributing to change in the world. With the insight art offers we can subscribe to this larger world with

greater satisfaction, and a better sense of our responsibility, as we contribute with diligence to its improvement.'

(A participant)

The final entracte, by entrepreneur Ben Decock, provides a good impetus for thinking and looking further.

Entracte 7
Most cities originate on islands

The importance of a new perception of art and the economy

The art/economy polarity is exemplary of many contrasts that surround us. It is, moreover, remarkable that in spite of globalisation and the exponential growth in communications, these contrasts are perceived as increasingly sharp. In theory, we know that based on the axiom of equality, we should be able to overcome differences. But in practice we find that through the post-modern generalisation of subjectivity, a values vacuum drives people apart. This applies to the contrasts between art/economy, but also to south/north, Islam/Christianity, red/blue, immigrant/native, man/woman, etc. How can we overcome this neo-Zoroastrian way of thinking?

The breakthrough is found in the formulation of the problem – arteconomy – itself. The creativity professor Edward De Bono teaches us that we actually make few errors in thinking – we are too well-trained – but many errors in perception. Before we begin to play with the blocks on the table we have to ask ourselves if they are really blocks, and whether there is any other toy there; and whether there are not too many or too few blocks. Creative options become visible when we do not jump into the picture as soon as we are invited to do so. Arteconomy is in itself a clearly formed picture. There are two blocks on the table: art and the economy. How have these and other categories developed and why do we need them?

Perception and cognitive tricks to avoid sensory overload

Perception is jargon for observation with a surplus. Awareness is very closely linked to the sensory; observation goes a little further and is therefore more influenced by the intellect, and perception is even more so. Perception implies learning and recognition. It is, then, a process that includes more than just what enters via our senses. If you analyse the way the senses function – in the West we recognize five and in the East they add a sixth: the brain – then you notice that they are all really digital mechanisms. A change – in reality a vibration – effects a (chemical) reaction which triggers a signal that travels through kilometres of nerve pathways to be passed on to a location in our brain.

Two issues are important here. First, our senses assault our brain with countless signals: each tingling sensation, light and dark, all the colours in our wider than 180° field of vision, all the sounds from near and far, the flavours in our mouth, and the smells around us. Secondly, our senses are so created that they react only to differences. If we could fix our eye on a red dot, it would disappear after several seconds. Our eyes are in constant motion and thus we continue to see the image we have picked up. What does not change we do not observe. These two characteristics of perception – consisting of an infinite number of signals and based on differences – are very important to an understanding of why people create categories.

To avoid chaotic overload from all the information flowing into our brain via our senses, we have several cognitive tricks to keep us sane. De Bono has analysed them because these tricks help us to keep our head above water, but they also block our creativity.

One of the most important tricks is our attention. Of course by focusing we eliminate a large portion of the incoming information. We allow certain images to exist in the field of observation, with the result that the rest becomes background.

Another principle is simplification. When we see a chair, we do not perceive it as an object we are seeing for the first time; it is not a new discovery over and over. Since childhood we have learned through trial and error very quickly to 'scan', and on the basis of a number of essential and adequate characteristics we activate the notion of 'chair'. We have access, then, to several processes to narrow our observation so we can cope with the world. Thinking in categories makes life easier. Any nuance requires more effort than black and white. As humans we are made in such a way that the differences are apparent and receive attention, and so 'naturally' take on an inordinate amount of significance.

We see then, not with our eyes, but with our intellect. Our world is a mental construct, which is a good thing, or we would have trouble functioning. Both our focus on the contrast as well as our mechanism for narrowing reality are partially genetic and partially learned behaviours. It is virtually an automated system. Usually we are unaware of this mechanism, and certainly do not take it into consideration or even try to counteract it.

Contact conditioning and categorisation

How do we learn to cope with the world at large? One of the first ways is referred to in the literature as 'contact conditioning'. This is the principle that there is a logical relationship between the frequency of contact and the preference for something. It is the

positive side to the saying, 'out of sight, out of mind'. The more you are confronted with something, the stronger your preference. This applies to simple things such as colours, faces, programmes, brands and works of art but also to more complex things such as convictions, opinions, strategies, learning styles, etc. This effect is very strong. The empirical data collected about contact conditioning is huge. Categories we often use to structure our world acquire – over time (and with use) – a strong preponderance because we choose them above those with which we are less familiar.

A second way of dealing with the world is called 'social categorisation'. Apparently, individuals in a group immediately look for differences and connect with the people they feel they can identify with. This theory explains why we as people from Ghent identify ourselves as Belgians outside the country if we meet someone from Wallonia, as Flemish if we meet someone from Antwerp and from Ghent if we meet someone else from Ghent. It is thus in the context of growing nationalism and the need for a workable multicultural model of society that the Americans have heavily invested in research into the determinants of and solutions to social categorisation.

What is interesting is that we can break through this 'conditioning'. The most important means to achieve this is what is called 'individuation'. If you have the opportunity to become better acquainted with one person from the 'other' group, you will relativise the dividing line as well as minimise the difference in preference. This is, in my opinion, the mission of 'arteconomy'.

As long as we continue to look at the world through the perspective of 'art and the economy', we will continue to see the two as

separate entities. It is precisely when we are conscious that the division occurs intellectually that we can go beyond structures to learn anew to observe what we see. So we can look at a chair as if for the first time. We can observe the artist and his work without the stereotype of what it means to be an artist. We are able to investigate the entrepreneur and his work without the label 'entrepreneur' jumping out at us. A real contact, a real encounter is productive only if we leave aside the flags and banners. It is true that they are beacons meant to make the world more comfortable. But the 'flag' is not the 'people', just as the label 'artist' is not the 'person' and the 'finger' pointing at the 'moon' is not the moon. We have to learn to leave comfortable categories behind: not to ponder logically on what the new relationship between art and the economy can be, but to bypass categories and see anew what is presented to us before we accept the structure.

This can occur in part as we broaden our experience, and in part by means of what we referred to above as 'individuation'. It is through personal acquaintance with entrepreneurs and artists that we can bypass the roles and the patterns that have become ingrained. Integration does not lie in a melting down, a loss of identity, but in relinquishing the pigeonhole into which we have placed ourselves as well as art and the economy. In reality, 'art' and 'the economy' do not exist. We see people, with their desires, ambitions, dreams and their own ways of being part of the world. Sometimes they are entrepreneurs, sometimes they are artists, sometimes they are a bit of both; occasionally more of one than the other, and at times a mixture, adding something new.

Learning to see where we consistently go wrong is a long road. We are really very well conditioned in short-cuts, bypasses and templates. That knowledge is not enough. The challenge is increasingly to be aware of these mechanisms in ourselves and others and to work consciously with them or even take our distance from them. The basis of the saying that children will enter the Kingdom of God sooner is that they are not as extensively conditioned. Before passing instant judgement they are able to look at, smell or taste with an original curiosity as in, 'What is this?' For me, this represents the tenable idea behind the experiment of allowing artists to spend time in businesses. The idea is not to explore differences – which would generally confirm existing stereotypes, but to create an encounter on the basis of similarities. We need to let the labels go and consciously experience what is left and what fills the void. A mutual experience.

Art and the economy are learned categories and we use them to structure our world in order to make it manageable. These categories are widespread and are frequently managed so that they carry our preference. The most minute difference that we observe activates this mental division and our preference leans toward the part with which we are most familiar. Mental conditioning is how we authenticate each other. We know that we need not be slaves to what we have learned. By becoming conscious of these patterns we may distance ourselves if we wish. This distance removes our speed and comfort, but provides a new and honest way of seeing. Such a refreshing perspective allows us new discoveries, many of which would otherwise slip through the cracks of those collective structures. It is precisely in what is not found on these distinguishing labels that we can encounter each other. In that encounter lies

innovation. Beuys continues to remind me that everyone is an artist.

To get from one bank of the river to the other we could build a raft. Many people walk back and forth along the bank and call to the other side. Others jump onto the raft and cross the river. Some leave the raft and jump ashore. A few enter the water and build an island in the middle of the river. It is on the islands that most cities originate.

Ben Decock

Epilogue: Who is Arteconomy?

Arteconomy, a non-profit organisation, is the point of contact for all aspects of this publication and of the seminars on 'Art and the Economy: we see no difference' (www.arteconomy.be).

The organisation takes as its mission the quest for connections between art and the economy and for understanding the consequences of these links. How does Arteconomy view this relationship, and how does this non-profit organisation function? Its logo can tell us something more on the subject.

Let us begin with the basics: the logo's background. It is comprised of doodling, scribbling, a chaos of lines – as if created by one stroke of the pen – a long line with many twists and turns that repeatedly intersect. A clearly delineated form, a rectangular horizontal bar with the name 'arteconomy', is superimposed on the background.

The doodles express movement. Arteconomy identifies itself with a cloud of expanding lines, since these reflect our ambition to be in motion. We could call it the elusive, impalpable character of the organisation. Ask anyone to draw something as ephemeral as smoke and no doubt he will use the same type of line drawing.

It is in the gaseous state that atoms are the most closely linked, because they are free to move around and therefore more likely to collide. These are the connections Arteconomy researches, in the areas of both art and the economy. For Arteconomy, connections are encounters between art and the economy – in unity and diversity. These encounters take place either in groups or one on one. In the study of the relationship between art and the economy, Arteconomy is nomadic, moving from one meeting to the next. With travel comes increasing baggage, and Arteconomy sometimes picks up some more or leaves some behind, and hopes in this way for cross-pollination. Hence Arteconomy must be able to move around, to fertilise art with the economy and vice versa.

Furthermore, the scribbling is symbolic of Arteconomy's quest. There is no prescribed pattern to discard. Arteconomy has certain aspirations in mind, but the lines are drawn along the way. Often an encounter will reveal a new direction, or provide an invitation to turn back to meet again.

Every stopping place is, then, always temporary. The beam in the logo is a symbol of the stopping place, the rest area where Arteconomy sets up camp. It is the surrounding frame that symbolises the meeting space Arteconomy wants to be. There are moments in which the gaseous state of Arteconomy solidifies, hardens and

assumes the definite shape of, for example, a seminar, a platform for reflection, a consultancy or a research bureau. The beam is, then, a moment in time, as is a photograph: the memory, the hard disk of the organisation, which can take the form not only of encounters, but also that of a work of art, a study, or a book.

Charlotte Bonduel

Arteconomy collaborators:

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The eight seminars on 'Art and the Economy: we see no difference' were held between 4 May 2004 and 23 June 2005.

The organisation was handled by Arteconomy vzw.

The participating entrepreneurs were: Sabine Ballière, Geert Behaegel, Francis De Beir, Ben Decock, Michel Delfosse, Michel Espeel, Caroline Flipts, Martine Hoorens, Stefaan Lannoo, Jan Leysen, Jozef Lievens, Philip Maertens, Rudi Maes, Chrisse Mahieu, Guy Van den Storme, Manuel Scheldeman, Frank Schelstraete, Nick Top, Manu Tuytens, Stef Vande Meulebroucke, Dirk Vanderschueren, Walter Vanhaerents, Paul Vanhonsebrouck, Luc Vannevel, Thierry Verhaeghe de Naeyer.

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