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Mis-Design

Grace McQuilten

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Art, design, mis-design

Takashi Murakami is a contemporary artist who openly exploits the conflation of art, design and commerce. Murakami's work presents a mix of contemporary culture, influenced heavily by Japanese consumerism, and encompasses toys, t-shirts, action figures and posters as well as more traditional media such as painting, photography and sculpture. The aesthetic of his work derives from *anime*, or Japanese animation, in all its popular variations, from the cute 'Hello-Kitty' style of consumer decoration to the more confronting pornographic variations of *manga*. The work provides a visual feast, caters to all subcultures and seduces viewers, critics and consumers alike. Importantly, Murakami's artistic practice takes design as a medium in the production of graphics, products, corporations and exhibitions. As one theorist, Hiroki Azuma, comments, 'I can remember Murakami replying that it "didn't matter much" when told that one of his works had been run upside-down in a newspaper article. Such a stance plainly places Murakami more in the realm of designer or illustrator than artist, and he himself intentionally emphasises this aspect.'¹ Murakami describes his practice in terms of a 'superflat' aesthetic, working in two-dimensional space with simple shapes and characters that are repeated across various canvasses in seemingly endless variation and morph into three dimensional design products. There is an empty, disheartened quality to this production which is elucidated when Murakami describes one of his *anime* characters: '*Oval* has eyes all over his body, showing that he watches everything, without caring about anything.'² Produced in the climate of postmodern cynicism, Murakami's fantasy world is offered as consolation to the alienated subjects of late capital, reduced to shells of human character. Yet this should not be mistaken for critique. This conflation of art and design is perfectly postmodern, celebrating the collapse of traditional binaries and the resulting homogenous consumer world. In this space, art is twisted into commerce, and commerce into art.

In the contemporary, global sphere of cultural production, the embrace of design as an artistic medium is not especially surprising. In the wake of

1960s conceptualism, as Rosalind Krauss has observed, the modernist idea of a materially specific art medium has given way to artistic practices that dive into the heart of mass culture and use all media at hand. Artists, Krauss writes, 'have recourse to every material support one can imagine, from pictures to words to video to readymade objects to films'.³ Murakami's unapologetic embrace of art as commercial design, however, touches on the problematic outcome of this experimental turn – the tendency for art to seamlessly blend into the glittering façade of consumer culture, often serving commercial interests and evacuating critical content. Murakami's practice thus provides a perfect window for exploring the complex history of the interplay of art and commerce in post-industrial society, and allows consideration of the recent embrace of design in the sphere of contemporary art.

The relationship of art and consumer culture has been an ever-present issue in art practice in the twentieth-century, most notably in the work of Pop artists in the 1960s, and subsequent attempts to grapple with the relationship between art and commerce represent a continuation, rather than a renewal, of these concerns. There is a key difference, however, in early twenty-first century works that implicate themselves in the functioning of consumer culture. This difference involves a complex play of production, consumption and use in artistic practice that questions the very concept of artistic autonomy and critical thought in the context of our global, postmodern world. Starting with a survey of the relationship between art and consumer culture, this chapter will consider Marxist and Neo-Marxist readings of capitalism, focusing particularly on the work of Theodor Adorno. This will lead to an analysis of the tension between art and commerce in the context of contemporary consumer-capitalism in light of the writings of Deleuze and Guattari.

The issue of complicity is fundamental to an analysis of contemporary artwork that seeks a position internal to the mechanisms of consumer culture. The difficulty of analysis from 'outside' requires an artistic position necessarily inside contemporary culture, and therefore potentially in collusion with it. Yet there is a vast difference between collusion and critique, between design and mis-design. The ways in which the work of Murakami overlaps, exploits, mimics and diverges from commercial design sets the terms for this discussion of critical artistic practice in the context of contemporary consumer culture. Murakami embodies the double-bind of late capitalism – the way in which consumers unconsciously come to desire and ensure their own oppression within its systems – by undermining his own interests within the field of art through his embrace of design. This predicament sets the terms for understanding the experimental practices of Andrea Zittel, Adam Kalkin and the Vito Acconci studio, artists who configure design as a means to critically examine social production in the contemporary sphere.

The fashion of contemporary art

In 1985 Andy Warhol declared, 'Lock up a department store today, open the door after a hundred years and you will have a Museum of Modern Art.'⁴ The infiltration of consumer culture into the world of visual art is neither surprising nor novel to a contemporary art audience. In fact, it seems that we could now reverse Warhol's statement to declare instead, 'Lock up a Museum of Modern Art today, open the door after a hundred years and you will have a department store.' This increasing similarity between the spaces of art and commerce casts a shadow on Warhol's emphatic statement, suggesting not a democratisation of art so much as the gradual disappearance of art practices that do not fulfil commercial interests. While the experimental approach to artistic media, evident in Warhol's embrace of popular commodities, was staged by postmodern artists as a critique of the modernist elevation of art above everyday life, it also had the effect of homogenising artistic practices and lending them to the service of capital. In this context, as Krauss observes, 'every material support, including the site itself – whether art magazine, dealer's fair booth, or museum gallery – will now be leveled'.⁵ Perhaps it would be more pertinent to change Warhol's phrase altogether, and ask instead, 'What is the difference between the department store and the Museum of Modern Art today?'

The prominence of publicity, sponsorship and celebrity in the art market is hard to deny. As one prominent contemporary curator writes: 'Celebrity and photography are well-matched and important subjects for a contemporary portrait gallery.'⁶ Museums herald the 'cross-over' of art and fashion in exhibitions such as *Fashioning Fiction in Photography Since 1990*, held at the Museum of Modern Art – Queens in New York in April 2004 and *WILD: Fashion Untamed*, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2005. The trend continues with the exhibition *Breaking the Mode: Contemporary Fashion from the Permanent Collection at the LA County Museum of Art* in January, 2007.⁷ The assumption that disciplines of design and fashion are 'breaking' into the field of fine art reveals the conundrum – by maintaining supposed distinctions between 'fashion' and 'photography' or 'commercial' and 'artistic', these projects disguise the underlying and constant interconnection of these fields in our global and postmodern consumer world. As Naomi Klein argues, it is precisely in marketing their supposed difference and diversity that corporations disguise their homogenising effects. She writes, 'By embodying corporate identities that are radically individualistic and perpetually new, the brands attempt to inoculate themselves against accusations that they are in fact selling sameness.'⁸

It is by asserting the distinction between 'fashion' and 'art' that the commercial systems of the art market disguise their effective sameness in the contemporary marketplace. Even a position that asserts the distinction

between art and commerce, in this sense, can ultimately serve commercial interests, disguising the connections between art and the commercial world. This points to an underlying issue for contemporary artists: if this is a postmodern world where the difference between culture and economics is fast disappearing, what exactly is wrong with the commercialisation of art?

There has been no shortage of debate around the issue of corporate art collections and the corporate appropriation of art to legitimise business interests since the art-market boom in the 1980s. This has been evident in discussions by prominent art theorists, and various artists have used their work to stage institutional 'critiques' of the collusion between art and business.⁹ Despite their oppositional premises, such works have nevertheless proven to be easily reappropriated by the very systems they critique – whether indirectly in the form of advertising and marketing, or more directly in their sponsorship and in their adoption by corporate art collections. Hans Haacke's work, *On Social Grease* (1975), for example, was purchased as part of a corporate art collection by the Gilman Paper Company. The work, featuring commentaries on corporate involvement in the arts, from business and political representatives, was pointedly critical of the relationship between art and commerce. Its title used the comparison between social 'grace' and corporate marketing, or 'grease' to highlight the cultural legitimisation of business through its involvement in the arts. This critical foundation did not deter the Gilman Paper Company from purchasing the work, however, to promote their operations as open and socially transparent. It is very difficult for an artwork such as *On Social Grease* to remain unaffected by this kind of appropriation. As Chin-tao Wu writes, 'Gilman Paper's ownership of Haacke's work has not only minimised the critique that the artist was attempting to make in his works, but has actively, and radically, redefined the very meaning of the piece.'¹⁰ This paradoxical situation, wherein corporations can adapt to absorb subversive tactics aimed against them, can largely be attributed to the complex movements of postmodernism.

In the process of disavowing modernism's 'grand narratives' and essentialist ideals of artistic autonomy, it is evident that postmodernism also eradicated the modern artist's subversive potential. Fredric Jameson, for example, accuses postmodernism of 'discarding a modernist politics with a modernist art, and thereby leaving us politically aimless'.¹¹ Jurgen Habermas has likewise argued that postmodernism, despite its subversive premise, in fact reinscribes the values of bourgeois art and capitalism, going so far as to suggest that postmodernists tend toward neoconservatism. He writes:

More or less in the entire Western world a climate has developed that furthers capitalist modernisation processes as well as trends critical of cultural modernism. The disillusionment with the very failures of those programs that called for the negation of art and philosophy has come to serve as a pretense for conservative positions.¹²

Jean Baudrillard provides a disheartened view, suggesting that in contemporary society postmodern tactics of subversion are all but meaningless. He laments, 'transgression and subversion never get "on the air" without being subtly negated as they are: transformed into models, neutralised into signs, they are eviscerated of their meaning'.¹³ Such critical resignation helps to explain the tendency towards cynicism in contemporary artistic practice.

Partly in response to this impossible situation, often referred to as the impasse of postmodernism, the very concept of 'criticism' has receded under the bright lights of sensation. These issues were at the fore in a round-table discussion about the fate of criticism in the arts, published in *October* in 2002. Hal Foster described the decline of critical spaces in recent art, suggesting that in the past: 'There was a space for art and for critical practice to work out conflicts and contradictions that were in play in that order ... Today art doesn't serve that purpose anymore.'¹⁴ Benjamin Buchloh echoed his sentiments, describing the traditional role of the art museum and art critic as follows:

Both of these elements of the public sphere of art have become mythical and obsolete, since nobody really wants to know and nobody has to know any longer what the context, the history, the intentions, and the desires of artistic practice might have been.¹⁵

This situation has been further complicated by the conflation of art discourse within generalised critical fields such as 'visual culture' and 'material culture'.

While commercial appropriations may not seem particularly surprising in the context of a world overtaken by corporate influences, the field of visual art has always maintained at least a pretext of critical distance, if only in the guise of artistic freedom. Critical distance, in a contemporary context, does not have to reinscribe the modernist value of artistic 'autonomy'. Rather, it is a matter of thinking critically about the convoluted culture that both artists and critics are currently implicated in, of harnessing the conceptual possibilities of design practice without directing it toward a commercial outcome. Or, in Deleuze and Guattari's words: 'It is a question of keeping at a distance the forces of chaos knocking at the door.'¹⁶

Takashi Murakami's practice throws open this critical door and launches straight into the heart of commerce. His work is cute, seductive, exceptionally marketable and consumable, wide-ranging and successful both critically and commercially. He has become a formidable capitalist and a formidable influence in the art world, most particularly in the context of contemporary Japanese art. How can such an overt surrender to the systems of capital have been so well embraced by the art world, and what are the effects on critical artistic practice? Or, in the words of Yusuke Miname, 'Will he show us the future of art or will he destroy it?'¹⁷

The meaning of the nonsense of the meaning

Among Murakami's most celebrated works is the sculpture *My Lonesome Cowboy* (1998), a life-size depiction of a naked boy, proudly spouting a stream of white semen that circles around him in the style of a lasso (Plate 1). The work is an appropriation from the popular genre of erotic manga, *otaku*, transformed into an 'art' object through the title's reference to Andy Warhol's 1968 film *Lonesome Cowboys*. With bright plastic blue hair and cartoon features, it is cute and colourful enough to appeal to a general audience at the same time as carrying off a semblance of social critique through its exaggerated sexuality and references to 1960s pop art. Yet to what extent does *My Lonesome Cowboy* simply reproduce a popular fetish, thereby reinforcing the socio-economic conditioning of consumer desire, as opposed to providing insight or critique?

The design of the figure was modeled after a similar character in *otaku* animation, and in order to be as faithful to the genre as possible, Murakami employed commercial manufacturers to produce the piece. There is no sign that Murakami was attempting to challenge or modify the *otaku* stereotype, with its abstraction of human desire and affirmation of sexual fantasy according to social constructs. The trail of semen that encircles *My Lonesome Cowboy* is the most obvious example of this fetishism – the human bodily fluid is stylised and converted into a static, plastic model of imaginary dimensions. Human experience is thus transformed into an object that emits other-worldly qualities, with a dollar price to match. It becomes a commodity that fuels the drive to consume unnecessary goods, or in Marx's terms, 'a contriving and ever-calculating subservience to inhuman, sophisticated, unnatural and imaginary appetites'.¹⁸ The commodity is not produced to satisfy primal needs or desires, in this sense, but to enhance an unnecessary cycle of production and consumption, abstracted from human necessity. Marx writes, 'commodities have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom'.¹⁹ The single feature of the work that might remind us of human desire and bodily experience is brandished, cowboy-style, as a social weapon.

Murakami's celebration of the reified commodity is even more evident in the design for *Hiropon* (1997), the female counterpart to *My Lonesome Cowboy*. *Hiropon's* adolescent body is precariously balanced on one pointed foot, her tiny frame completely dwarfed by two bulbous breasts that explode from a tiny bikini. Only her elaborate blue hair competes with the presence of the breasts, from which milk spouts. The milk forms a complete circle around her, doubling as a skipping rope. Like *My Lonesome Cowboy*, *Hiropon* was not created as a critique of the objectification of the female body in *otaku* culture. Instead, it directly appeals to the market. Murakami admits, 'Because making a life-size figure is really no different than making a sex

doll (a dutch wife) in the context of the *anime* figure, it's safe to say it, ours was a fairly shameless plan from the start.²⁰ This desire to conform, rather than challenge, the *otaku* market was made even more transparent when Murakami decided to remodel *Hiropon* as a new character, *Miss Ko2*, to be more in line with the sexual fetishism of the popular genre and less unpalatable. Indeed, when Murakami approached a leading contemporary *otaku* designer about using one of his computer-game characters as the model for *Miss Ko2*, Murakami received a skeptical response. The designer, who is known simply as 'Bome', replied, 'This game is an utterly artless pandering to stereotypical *otaku* fetishism. Nor is it original – rather it was created with a complete understanding of the tastes of the entire *otaku* market for uniform fetishism.'²¹ To which Murakami said, 'That's what I want.'²² Placing examples of social fetish in the context of an art gallery might arguably open them to some form of critical reflection. Yet when the art gallery is simultaneously configured as a commercial space, for example when Murakami uses it as a means to promote and sell a variety of merchandise, then the space for critical reflection gives way to general consumption. The problems associated with this critical ambivalence become more apparent in the context of Murakami's subsequent forays into overt commercial production.

Murakami's status in the contemporary art market escalated in 2003 when he collaborated with Marc Jacobs on a range of designer handbags for elite fashion brand Louis Vuitton. Working with his own iconography, he created two monograms – one based on round, colourful flowers animated with smiling faces, the other featuring floating eye motifs taken from his *anime* characters. While clearly maintaining links to his visual art practice and its pretext of criticality, all traces of content, including the subtext of cultural critique, was evacuated from the resulting design. The thoroughly friendly pattern served simply to highlight and ornament the traditional Louis Vuitton monogram, 'LV', which remained within the pattern, transformed from brown and gold into Murakami's more colourful primary palette. Of course, there is nothing illogical about this kind of decorative design emerging in the context of fashion. When simultaneously embraced by the art world, however, the issue of the artwork's 'design' becomes more complex. In this case, Murakami's aesthetic was a vehicle for commercial advertising both inside and outside of the gallery. The effect was obvious and at the same time insidious. For example, when Murakami's Louis Vuitton monogram was subsequently used on the cover of the critical publication, *DesignArt* (Figure 1.1), as an illustration of the interplay of art and design, the graphic design ceased to be considered in purely commercial terms.²³ Yet it did not stop advertising Louis Vuitton to an elite market of art consumers.

Placing him within the tradition of American pop art, Amanda Cruz reads Murakami's lack of criticality as expository, suggesting 'With his uncanny ability to mirror his culture he is more the equivalent of Andy Warhol than



Alex Coles

DesignArt



1.1 Alex Coles, *DesignArt*, book cover, © Tate 2005.

someone intent on critiquing things.²⁴ This statement is revealing for what it overlooks. Not only does Cruz assume that Warhol was ‘not intent on critiquing things’, but she also fails to address the fundamentally different context in which each artist’s work emerged. In 1964, for example, Warhol filled a gallery space with cardboard boxes printed with Brillo branding, apparently identical to the boxes in which the Brillo soap scourers were commercially stored. Warhol’s presentation of serial imagery disturbed the widely held modernist view of the originality of the work of art. This overt display of the infiltration of consumer culture in the art world of the 1960s provided a juxtaposition of art and mass culture to an audience who perceived a clear division between the two.

While works such as the iconic Campbell’s soups cans and Mickey-Mouse prints appeared to be simulating the uniformity of mass culture, the effect was of individuation: not only between each (slightly different) print, but in pointing to the concept of serialisation itself. Rosalind Krauss insists that Warhol’s seriality was not a celebration of homogeneity. Instead, she suggests, it was ‘the endless insistence on the fact of difference within the same’.²⁵ Each print in his Marilyn Monroe series, for example, was slightly different; traces of ink on each image marking the failure, even in reproduction, to completely conform to the model. In his own claim, ‘I haven’t been able to make every image clear and simple and the same as the first one’, it is hard to tell whether he is lamenting or celebrating the originality this implies.²⁶ Benjamin Buchloh argues that despite Warhol’s claims of uncriticality, his work retained a critical function: it pointed to the reified existence of the art object, showing the disappearing distinction between art and commerce in spectacle culture, as well as revealing the appropriation of the avant-garde by the institutions they traditionally challenged. Buchloh writes that Warhol ‘unified within his constructs the views of both victors and the victims of the late twentieth century’.²⁷

Murakami’s work, on the other hand, lacks this tension; art retains no space from consumerism to provide contrast or juxtaposition. Where Warhol filled the gallery with replicas of existing consumer imagery, in the form of Brillo boxes for example, Murakami paints without referent his own branding. Murakami is the Brillo manufacturer. His trademark character, ‘DOB’ is one such product. A large, round, panda face with big friendly eyes rests on a petite mouse-like body, resulting in a cute combination of Astro-boy, and – in true Warholian style – Mickey Mouse. Where Warhol displayed the existing consumer fetishism of Mickey Mouse in his reproductions, Murakami prints his own logo, exploiting the fetishistic character of consumer imagery to create his own commodity. DOB can be found on keychains, on clothing, on postcards, in department stores and also, naturally, in most art museum stores. Where traces of ink in Warhol’s work pointed to the means of its own production, suggesting a self-conscious replication of existing imagery,

Murakami is meticulous in technique, creating seamless images that blend perfectly into the commercial landscape.

The question of whether there is room for criticality in Murakami's artistic position becomes rhetorical when examining his overt commercial operations. His Louis Vuitton collaboration was a huge commercial success, as described in this *Time International* review:

After whipping up a hive's worth of buzz at the Louis Vuitton fashion show in Paris last fall, and receiving rhapsodic reviews from the likes of *Vogue* and *Women's Wear Daily*, the art world's favorite son has suddenly found himself fashion's 'It' boy too.²⁸

Of course, Murakami is open about this approach to the commercialisation of art. He proudly claims that one of his objectives, for example, is 'not so much to think collectively about pop art as to create "art products"'.²⁹ There is potential to explore the murky depths of the postmodern condition in this kind of commercial project, and it is this kind of complicity that signifies the 'internal' position of many artists involved in contemporary culture. Yet Murakami's work plays with surfaces.

In his designer handbags, the Murakami monogram became an artistic logo in a commercial world. Likewise, its appearance in the space of the gallery became a signifier for Murakami as artist. As Klein so clearly describes in the introductory paragraph to *No Logo*, consumer culture does not create products anymore: 'successful corporations must produce brands, as opposed to products.'³⁰ In the realms of both art and commerce, Murakami's DOB functions as commercial branding, and in both realms this façade celebrates the depthless nature of consumerism. There is not much room for consumer agency or alternative modes of production and consumption in Murakami's model – he appropriates the signs and symbols of popular culture, reiterates them in an art context, and then his work is re-appropriated by commercial systems. If the product of consumer capitalism is now obsolete, as Klein suggests, and what is advertised, sold and distributed in the marketplace is now branding itself, then Murakami is indeed the perfect corporation. Murakami's logo spreads across museums, commercial galleries, fashion advertising and into the street.

The commercial functioning of the gallery likewise remains unchallenged. Murakami is happy to exploit the status of art as a precious commodity, at the same time as manufacturing popular commodities on a larger scale under the umbrella of 'design'. Rather than pushing the limits of the cross-over of art and commerce, he retains and exploits their boundaries. This points to Michel Foucault's understanding of transgression, which he sees as entwined with, rather than subversive of, the limit that it seeks to transgress. He writes, 'Perhaps it is simply an affirmation of division.'³¹ Asked about the blurring of his identity as an artist and fashion designer, Murakami

responded: 'I need to rebuild the wall between the commercial art and the fine art I do.'³² In a mimetic affirmation of consumer capitalism, he keeps his commercial and 'fine art' operations divided, so as to capitalise on both. In this way he mirrors the strategies of corporations such as the Gilman Paper Company, whose appropriation of Haacke's work depended on a distinction between the work's status as 'fine art' and its own corporate interests.

This was made most evident when Murakami battled a rival manufacturer, Narumiya International, for infringing his copyright. Claiming that the children's clothing brand had used *anime* characters with similar mouse-like characteristics to his cherished DOB, Murakami reverted to an assertion of the value of his work as 'art'. After the case was settled, he released a statement claiming, 'The concept of originality is the lifeline of contemporary art ... The characters that I create are not just characters; they are also art.'³³ Rather than exploring the interplay of his appropriations with the exchanges of late capital in a critical way, Murakami instead defended his commercial territory, claiming tens of millions of yen in compensation.³⁴

Murakami's references to Andy Warhol and American pop provide historical legitimacy for his commercial interests. Historical context is one of the key differentiators used by critics to disentangle art from the problems of postmodernism. Boris Groys, for example, argues:

But while art is consuming consumption and *archiving* scenes of this consumption, it succeeds in escaping simple subjugation under the constant changes in fashion, and simultaneously creates new, critical variants of consumption.³⁵

While Warhol claimed to celebrate artistic commercialism, his work consistently provided a juxtaposition of art and consumer culture, archiving a period in consumer history and opening a space, if nothing else, for questioning. In *The Consumer Society*, Jean Baudrillard dismisses the possibility of subversion in pop art, yet acknowledges its analytical function:

Quite logically, it has nothing to do with subversive, aggressive humour, with the telescoping of surrealist objects. It is no longer a question of short-circuiting objects in their function, but one of juxtaposing them to analyze the relations between them.³⁶

Murakami's work, however, lacks this juxtaposition. It does not archive consumer culture: it produces it. Where Warhol attempted to make art that was 'exactly the same' as popular culture, Murakami goes one step further.³⁷ He makes popular culture that is 'exactly the same' as art.

When Murakami's designer handbags were exhibited at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York, for example, one reviewer responded to a comparison between Murakami's work and Warhol's *Flowers* with the following observation: 'Murakami has, however, carried Warhol's idea to another

level. He has not “appropriated” the LV label, but is actually working for the company.³⁸ Murakami’s mimetic affirmation, in this sense, contains only the ‘victors’ of the late twentieth century. In this sense, his practice of art-design is a perfect statement of the postmodern paradox, where all resistance seems to be futile and no outside position seems to be available.³⁹ It is important to question the popular and critical embrace of this apparent surrender to consumerism, and to think carefully about what the lack of critique – both in the production and reception of his work – signifies for the art world more broadly.

Despite the claim on one hand to provide a mirroring of contemporary life, Murakami’s work revels in fantasy. He has declared, ‘I like to immerse myself in thinking and talking about things in the fantasy world that have no role in society whatsoever.’⁴⁰ This is evident in decorative paintings such as *Superflat Jellyfish Eyes 2* (2003), where bright circles of colour float around in a black expanse, creating a two-dimensional space that unites its wallpaper-print aesthetic with science-fiction fantasy. It does not present existing consumer imagery, and Murakami does not provide an opportunity to examine consumer culture. Instead, his work feeds the commercial fire. His claim to ‘have no role in society whatsoever’ is obviously trite when his art is promoted and received as pop, deeply connected with the play of contemporary life. When contemporary society is understood as a play of fantasy and spectacle, as argued by theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Guy Debord, it is futile to dismiss the social function of ‘fantastical’ imaginings.⁴¹ Hyper-reality keeps consumers in a state of passive consumption.

Murakami’s artistic success rests on a guise of critical depth – hence his desire to keep his commercial projects separate from his artistic practice. While this complicity does not necessarily negate the function of his work, it poses a problem. Does his complete absorption in the consumer market reveal the inseparability of art and capital in contemporary culture, or is it nihilistic, aiding the total appropriation of art by the systems of consumer capitalism? It is not surprising that appraisals of his work are contradictory. Midori Matsui, for example, describes his work on the one hand as an example of postmodern poetry, using ‘metonymic chains of association that disrupt rational order and the schizophrenic juxtaposition of fragments that collapses time and draws one’s attention to the materiality of signs’.⁴² In the same analysis, Matsui describes Murakami as inspired by the ‘creation of an autonomous aesthetic space within the framework of realistic representation’.⁴³ Not content with simply encompassing postmodern practice, apparently Murakami successfully unites this position with the ideals of the modern avant-garde. Perhaps more notable in Matsui’s analysis was the following description of his sculptural piece *A Very Merry Unbirthday!*:

the sphere's golden glitter captures our puzzling fascination with the chimerical 'nothing' called art. Like the design of the wheel in water, it is a beautiful rebus suspended between meaning and nonmeaning.⁴⁴

It is not Murakami's artistic position that poses a problem so much, in this sense, as the inherent acceptance of the 'chimerical "nothing" called art'.

Murakami's corporation, the Kaikai Kiki Corporation, has locations in Tokyo and New York. In addition to a prolific commercial and artistic output, the organisation also produces a stream of commercial artists. The Warhol-inspired factory employs numerous assistants who are, in turn, exhibited as artists in their own right at private galleries under Murakami's curatorial direction. In 2004, for example, Murakami staged a themed exhibition called *Tokyo Girls Bravo* at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York. The show featured the work of ten of his assistants, claiming to provide 'insight into Tokyo pop art from the female perspective by presenting it as a form of escapism, distraction and entertainment within a culture known for its strict social codes'.⁴⁵ In keeping with Murakami's personal aesthetic, fantasy was presented as critique and directed at the consumption of more products.

Despite the pretext of showcasing emerging artists, it is important to note that the exhibition foregrounded Murakami himself. Not only did the show border on exoticism in its exploitation of the artists' cultural identity, but their practices were subsumed in the midst of the Murakami marketing. The press release for the show, for example, contained three introductory paragraphs featuring Murakami, with two paragraphs at the end encapsulating the work of ten artists. Adding some commercial glitter, the gallery also sold artist-designed T-shirts for \$40. This effect was mirrored in another Murakami-curated exhibition held in January 2004 at the LFL Gallery in New York, where the three featured artists were described first and foremost as 'members of the Kaikai Kiki Corporation created by Takashi Murakami'.⁴⁶ While there are obvious similarities between Murakami's corporation and Andy Warhol's factory, there is a significant difference. In the context of early postmodernism, Warhol's work presented a direct challenge to the elevation of fine art above everyday life. In a contemporary setting, Murakami's work does not challenge, but rather profits from and reinforces the elevation of his artistic practice in a lucrative market.

Apart from raising obvious issues of commercialism, these exhibitions also point to the simple issue of curatorial credibility. If curators are corporate directors displaying the work of their employees, then what capacity is there for diversity, creative freedom and critical reflection in their artistic practice? Murakami is not so much a curator, in this context, as a designer. In addition to designing products, he is designing the shape and future of contemporary artistic practice. Speaking of Kaikai Kiki, for example, he has stated: 'It's possible to make an art-idol in the same way the music industry or the movie industry produces pop stars.'⁴⁷ He has a particularly noticeable influence on

the perception and reception of contemporary Japanese art by the Western art market. This was most evident in his 2005 curatorial blockbuster exhibition, *Little Boy: the Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*.⁴⁸ Held at the Japan Society in New York, the exhibition was staged, in true Hollywood style, as the final part in a trilogy of projects. In keeping with this spectacular theme, the exhibition presented an overload of sensorial and visual material from film, sculpture, drawing, painting, merchandising, popular television, design and illustration. Murakami's ambition for the project was nothing less than 'the project of defining the true nature of postwar Japanese culture'.⁴⁹

The title *Little Boy* refers to the nickname given to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. It is also supposed to allude to a sense of cultural emasculation that pervaded in Japan's popular media in the aftermath of this devastating attack. It is unclear, however, how Murakami's sampling of Japanese popular culture actually addresses this sense of emasculation. In fact, it is nothing short of reductive to suggest that the enjoyment of children's games, television and literature evident in Japanese consumer culture is related to the trauma of 1945, particularly in the context of the worldwide explosion of the culture industry around the same time.

The two-dimensionality of *Little Boy's* cultural critique is perhaps best encapsulated in Murakami's own artistic contribution to the show, a painting titled *Time Bokan – Pink* (2001). A smooth, hot pink acrylic surface dominates the painting, which provides a backdrop for the clean, white form of a mushroom cloud at its center. Ringed with fluorescent yellow, the cartoon-curved cloud is also formed in the shape of a human skull. The image was appropriated from a popular children's show from the 1970s called, naturally, 'Time Bokan'. The iconic form was made 'Murakami' through the use of bright colour, clean form and the addition of his signature flower motifs in the shape of eyes. It also contained a smaller version of the same form in black, mirrored and turned upside down at the top of the canvas, giving a symmetrical effect to the overall piece. The resulting image was decidedly friendly. Despite its reference to human atrocity, it was not so much disconcerting as absurd, collapsing the enormous social and political implications of nuclear warfare into a mushroom-shaped illustration of pop culture. This is the danger of a 'superflat' aesthetic – collapsed boundaries result in a loss of history, a loss of identity and a loss of difference.

Similarly, the exhibition as a whole conflated potentially revealing imagery from *otaku* subculture with a generic celebration of popular consumption. This was most evident in the work of Mahomi Kunikata, for example, with her violent and disturbing interpretations of erotic manga. Caught in fragments between 'Hello Kitty' merchandise and large colourful *anime* sculptures, the potentially critical effect of this material was evacuated, subsumed in the overall Murakami-effect. As Roberta Smith noted in her review of the exhibition, '*Little Boy* is Mr Murakami's show from beginning to end, to such

a degree that it might almost be considered an extended artwork.⁵⁰ This was also evident in the exhibition's catalogue, which failed to provide a full list of exhibited artists and artworks, yet featured several texts and interviews by Murakami.⁵¹ The critical content of the exhibition was turned away from specific works themselves and toward Murakami's curation, which was so overloaded with competing influences that it became virtually indecipherable. This leads back to Krauss's verdict on the unanticipated effect of mixed-media practices, wherein specific forms are 'reduced to a system of pure equivalency by the homogenising principle of commodification, the operation of pure exchange value from which nothing can escape and for which everything is transparent to the underlying market value for which it is a sign'.⁵²

Murakami's work is described in terms of a breakdown of meaning – the title of his major solo exhibition in 1999 was *Takashi Murakami: the meaning of the nonsense of the meaning*. This breakdown, however, does not challenge or penetrate the surface of consumer branding, advertising or merchandising. It does, however, disrupt the very 'meaning' of art within a context of rampant consumerism. Murakami thus embodies a critical impasse in contemporary art. Appropriating the signs and systems of both modern and contemporary culture in order to disrupt their distinctions, his work faces the fundamental paradox of postmodernism itself – that the breakdown of structural meaning is used to provide an illusion of meaning for the systems of late capitalism. In the process of eradicating distinctions between art and commerce, the very spaces from which art can emerge are eroded.

Shopping!

In 2002, the Tate Gallery Liverpool held a major exhibition called *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*. The exhibition catalogue, a flashy, colourful and delectable visual experience in itself, encapsulates some of the problems, issues and paradoxes involved in any examination of the seductive world of consumer culture. This problematic territory is the ground of this book, and negotiating the various temptations provides an interesting and difficult critical challenge. It is easy to browse the pages of *Shopping* like a magazine, lapping up the images and skipping over essays to read instead double-page features of pithy quotes in cartoon bubbles. Marilyn Monroe's enticing, 'I've found out it's fun to go shopping. It's such a feminine thing to do', sits alongside Duchamp's 'Art lies in the street and it is to be found on the shelves of the department store', which lies in close proximity to equally digestible quotations from Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin and Andy Warhol. This array of one-liners, a perfect postmodern sampling of art, politics and popular culture, eradicates historical and social context, seeming to flirt with the shortened attention span required of a magazine.

Aside from its superficial allure, the catalogue does contain some very interesting explorations of both current and past connections between art and consumer culture. Notably, some of the most interesting observations are made in historical surveys of pop, fluxus and surrealism; suggestive of the importance of historical context in effectively analyzing the social function of art. Perhaps it is in the archives of art that possible resolutions to some of these issues may arise.

The merging of the art object with popular culture was not simply an act of democratisation for many pop artists, but more importantly signified a unification of art with lived experience. For Claes Oldenburg, the merging held the promise of a surrealistic union of subject and object, a utopian harmony of art and life. In his 1961 project, *The Store*, Oldenburg rented a shop in New York City and, using plaster and other materials, filled it with sculptural objects that replicated consumer merchandise. Describing his fusion of the art object with popular culture, he proclaimed: 'Then the magic inherent in the universe will be restored and people will live in sympathetic religious exchange with the objects surrounding them.'⁵³ Oldenburg's blending of commerce and art was not an act of eradicating difference, but rather represented an attempt to try to locate differentiation itself. As Oldenburg explains, 'The original idea of *The Store* was a simple one – to fill a space with objects such as those in any kind of store, but this was not satisfactory as I proceeded. The problem became how to individualise the simple objects, how to surprise them.'⁵⁴ Oldenburg's works were anything but homogenous – brightly coloured, roughly moulded objects bearing the expressive marks of their creation were strung from the ceiling and spilled across the store. His documentation of the project, *Store Days*, contained inventories and theoretical observations alongside expressive drawings, surrealistic observations and poetic notations. Rather than reflecting or reproducing contemporary culture, in the style of Murakami, Oldenburg dipped the consumer world into the depths of the human psyche.

Focusing on objects of consumption, however, lends itself toward reappropriation. In contemporary artistic continuations of pop concerns, neither the art object nor the commodity is infused with difference. Instead, it seems both art and commodity have been subsumed entirely, with the contemporary subject appearing more alienated than ever before. We live in Baudrillard's world of the 'hyper-real', in which the object of representation has been lost altogether, rather than in Oldenburg's pop version of the surreal. This difference is elaborated by Baudrillard in 'The Hyper-realism of Simulation', where he writes:

The secret of surrealism was that the most banal reality could become surreal, but only at privileged moments, which still derived from art and the imaginary. Now the whole of everyday political, social, historical, economic reality is incorporated into the simulative dimension of hyper-realism.⁵⁵

The alienated object of contemporary culture is evident in the work of many artists and it is interesting to trace how artists are conceiving paths around, and through, this condition.

In the final essay of the *Shopping* catalogue, Julian Stallabrass reiterates Theodor Adorno's questions about the commodification of art in his critique of the culture industry, and suggests that internet art could provide a possible alternative in the search for artistic position. While this may be true, it also confronts the danger of marginalisation, not to mention restricting artistic diversity. Looking at the issue of the commodification of the art object, Stallabrass briefly raises another interesting point; the apparent lack of attention paid to the production of art in these discussions. He suggests that while there has been a keen focus on consumption, the production of art and consumer products has been a blind-spot. He writes, 'The exclusive focus on consumption in much of the art world is an ideological matter, one that flows from the prominence of advertising and other corporate propaganda, for which the less that is thought about production ... the better.'⁵⁶ This is where the discourses of art can benefit from a closer engagement with the means of production and its relation to consumption. The field of commercial design, by contrast, is transparent in its engagement with the production process.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the complex interplay of production and consumption reflects the complex nature of late capitalism. Capitalism expands, they argue, by breaking down borders and territories on the one hand, and reorganising them within its systems on the other. This also relates to the sphere of artistic production, where subversive critical practice emerges only to be reappropriated by capitalist systems. They describe this process in relation to smooth and striated space in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). Smooth space, usually the space of art, is described as global, expansive, organic and revolutionary. In smooth space, they write, 'life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries'.⁵⁷ Striated space, in contrast, is described as the space of social systems, it is local and ordered, a space of control. This is normally the space of production. It is tempting to consider the two in oppositional terms, yet Deleuze and Guattari maintain that they are not mutually exclusive, instead feeding into each other (much as postmodern subversion feeds into capitalist homogenisation). They write, 'Even the most striated city gives rise to smooth spaces.'⁵⁸ They suggest that global capitalism is both striated (in its organisational control of populations and spaces) and smooth (in its ability to spread globally and encompass a diversity of cultural and social spaces).

Just as capitalism is both striated and smooth, they suggest, revolutionary or subversive movements need to use the progressive and organisational capabilities of striated space in conjunction with the opening of smooth spaces: 'Perhaps we must say that all progress is made by and in striated space, but all becoming occurs in smooth space.'⁵⁹ Where artistic practice has

tended to avoid the sphere of production in the past, in order to retain its autonomous, smooth function, this has inadvertently allowed it to be more easily appropriated by capital. Late capitalism is understood in this analysis as fundamentally postmodern. The reappropriation of artistic subversion by commercial culture is just a symptom of capital's constant process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, where boundaries and differences are broken down in order to be incorporated back into its systems.

For artists, then, the use of striated space in the form of commercial production can be seen as a strategy to enable the production of smooth spaces – critical spaces in which to reorganise and reevaluate life, to mis-design the consumer sphere. A potent artistic example of this concept can be found in the work of Gregor Schneider, who in *Dead House u r* (1985–1996) actively deconstructed (deterritorialised) and reconstructed (reterritorialised) the space of his childhood home, placing sections on display in various galleries and museums. Using the foundations of striated space, he created a dysfunctional, distorted and claustrophobic space that aroused both spatial and psychic anxiety. This anxiety is clear in the following description:

Only a few people can experience *Dead House u r* at one time because of its narrow corridors and tiny crawl spaces. The effect is as if you have entered a series of isolation chambers or black holes. As you move from room to room, you perceive the formidable history and legacy of the house itself and the family that occupied it.⁶⁰

In effect, this reconstruction opened the striated space of the family unit, with its social construction of identity, to the smooth space of the body and the psyche, enabling a reconceptualisation of the familial and domestic realm.⁶¹ Moreover, it was an overt example of mis-design – of breaking down and re-designing architectural space with no commercial purpose.

Collusion

Artistic projects emerging in the field of design have the potential to open up smooth spaces in the field of social production. Yet there is an important distinction between collusion and critique, between design and mis-design, as evident in Murakami's practice. When Murakami described *My Lonesome Cowboy* as 'my first marketing creation in the art world', he demonstrated what could be considered an 'ironic' approach to the contemporary market.⁶² In the context of contemporary art, his project depends on this sense of irony. By being self-conscious in his appropriations, Murakami suggests that his work is more culturally-specific, and more historically meaningful, than fashion. At the same time, his project is configured as an attempt to re-brand art in the postmodern world. Art is present, apparently, even though it is serving

the commercial interests of companies such as Louis Vuitton. Murakami thus provides a world of consumer fetish for those who understand the problems of consumer capitalism, but have given up thinking it might change. The premise is that self-aware consumption somehow negates the alienating means of production.

This forms the basis of Daniel Miller's advocacy of positive consumption in *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987), where he suggests that mass industry and its alienating effects are unavoidable and inevitable. The only recourse for the consumer, he argues, is to transform commodities through personal and social acts of consumption and an active participation in 'culture'. In contrast to Stallabrass's focus on production, Miller suggests 'the site of potential social self-creation has moved increasingly into the sphere of consumption'.⁶³ While this embrace of engaged consumption provides a positive outlook on ways of overcoming the oppressive effects of mass production, Miller's model relies on consumers conforming to social groups, identifying with 'culture' and forging identities through models that are created and distributed by systems of mass production.⁶⁴ While consumers may feel less alienated within a particular social group, their capacity for true differentiation is subsumed in this identification with commodities. Moreover, it relies on an assumption that the means of production is hopelessly alienating and beyond transformation. Miller writes, 'The key criteria for judging the utility of contemporary objects is the degree to which they may or may not be appropriated from the forces which created them, which are mainly, of necessity, alienating.'⁶⁵

Aimed at a disaffected society, this is a theory of consolation that should not be mistaken for critique. Late capitalism operates on precisely a level of cynical consumption. This issue is at the heart of Peter Sloterdijk's philosophical text, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1987), wherein he describes an enlightened false consciousness, characterised by cynicism, as the defining feature of the contemporary world. He writes:

In the neocynical attitude, world-historical learning processes of bitterness come to fruition. They have stamped the traces of the coldness of exchange, of world wars, and the self-denial of ideals in our consciousness, which have become sick with experience. Hey, we're alive; hey, we're selling ourselves; hey, we're arming.⁶⁶

The effect, Sloterdijk suggests, is not an enlightened participation in the systems of a new world – as Miller might claim – but instead the repetition of the very historical conditions that elicited the cynical attitude. He writes, 'In this way cynicism guarantees the expanded reproduction of the past on the newest level of what is currently the worst.'⁶⁷ In this sense, rather than providing a creative alternative to the consumer market, cynical consumption only reinforces the oppressive nature of capitalist production.

The term 'irony' is used repeatedly in discussions of contemporary postmodern appropriation, and there is a danger that it is easily conflated with the cynical condition of the contemporary postmodern subject. This conflation of cynicism with irony threatens the potential subversive dimension of ironic humour, rendering it impotent in the face of a lethargic shrug. As Baudrillard suggests in *The Consumer Society* (1970):

let us not forget that a *certain smile* is one of the *obligatory signs* of consumption: it no longer represents a humour, a critical distance, but is merely a reminder of that transcendent critical value which today is given material value in the knowing wink. This false distance is present everywhere ... It is not really clear in the end whether this 'cool' smile is the smile of humour or that of commercial complicity. This is also the case with Pop, and its smile ultimately encapsulates all its ambiguity: it is not the smile of critical distance, but the smile of *collusion*.⁶⁸

While artists such as Oldenberg and Warhol clearly challenge Baudrillard's dismissal of pop as a means of critique, he articulates an important link between cynicism and collusion in acts of 'ironic' consumption. The question of collusion is central to Theodor Adorno's theorisation of the role of the 'culture industry' in the 1960s. While Adorno's reading of consumer culture was totalising in its critique, at the heart of his examination lay the very question of critical space that contemporary artists are now grappling with. For Adorno, the loss of the modernist distinction between mass culture and art did not spell the beginning of an era of democratisation, but instead signified the subject's total domination by capital. As capitalism sought to control every aspect of the subject's life, Adorno argued, its main source of production became cultural: 'Cultural entities typical of the culture industry are no longer *also* commodities, they are commodities through and through.'⁶⁹ Capitalism thus proved itself capable of appropriating all aspects of avant-garde artistic practice. Adorno described how even an ironic celebration of the complicity of art and capital could be absorbed in the logic of the culture industry, where 'The information communicated by mass culture constantly winks at us.'⁷⁰

According to Adorno, the result of this breakdown between art and mass culture is the production of a standardised, repetitive and average culture in which the consumer is reduced to a state of passive consumption, radically alienated from the products they consume and held in an eternal present without conflict or the possibility of transcendence. Adorno's fatalistic view is evident, for example, when he describes the 'exploitation of the ego-weakness to which the powerless members of contemporary society, with its concentration of power, are condemned'.⁷¹ The predicament is not much better for art, where the possibility of criticality is given a terminal prognosis when he refers to monopoly as the 'executor'.⁷²

Adorno's perspective is almost perfectly reversed in Murakami's 'Super flat manifesto', where he describes the simulacra-effect of contemporary culture

as the incentive for his two-dimensional aesthetic. He observes, 'Society, customs, art, culture: all are extremely two-dimensional.'⁷³ Rather than considering the alienating effect of such a flattened contemporary space on the contemporary subject, or how it might be reconfigured, Murakami instead uses this observation to advocate a similarly flat aesthetic in contemporary art. He supports the argument with references to the history of Japanese art, drawing attention to the two-dimensionality of traditional painting and equating this with the surface-obsessed nature of contemporary culture. He writes:

One way to imagine super flatness is to think of the moment when, in creating a desktop graphic for your computer, you merge a number of distinct layers into one ... The reason I have lined up both the high and the low of Japanese art in this book is to convey this feeling.⁷⁴

What Murakami fails to account for in 'super flat' is why art should be attempting to convey this feeling. The theory, like the aesthetic, lacks content. Where Adorno's theorisation served as a warning for the serious implications of a homogenous consumer landscape, Murakami simply observes the loss of history, context, and meaning that has resulted. In this sense, he resembles *Oval*, watching everything *without caring about anything*.

Just as conscious links to Warhol lent credibility to his practice in the context of the New York art market, observations about the 'flatness' of traditional Japanese art and culture are used in 'super flat' to elevate his practice above the realms of merchandising. It is difficult to establish, however, if these references to the populism of Japanese art are supporting the super flat aesthetic, or whether Murakami is actually condemning this tradition. While he associates himself with this lineage in 'super flat', he has also been clear in expressing disdain for the very populism he champions:

I have explained and denounced many times, that in Japan, the societal recognition and understanding of art remains low. Japan, as a country, displays a striking lack of cultural consciousness among its citizens, and is often utilitarian and lacking respect for the development of art and ideas.⁷⁵

This condemnation doesn't seem to fit with his own commercial practice, which espouses a very 'utilitarian' approach to the market. Murakami's position in 'super flat' can therefore only be accounted for by cynicism; the cynical perspective of his consumer, and his cynical approach to the conditions of contemporary art. This is a condition, in his words, defined as 'The flat reality left when Pop fizzled; a flattened, self-mocking culture.'⁷⁶

Murakami's insistence on the elimination of divisions between 'the high and the low' is similarly contradictory, most especially in the context of his views on artistic authorship. Describing a typically 'super flat' painting, for

example, he comments: 'As it is done in a "super flat" style, though, it is also extremely "avant-garde" and "original."' In a sense, 'super flat' also refers to the modernist flattening of the picture plane in search of pure form. Yet Murakami's work is not interested in the formal space of the canvas – his super flat painting employs a variety of iconography that refers beyond itself. Instead, flatness becomes style. What Murakami does take from modernism, however, is the idea of style equating with innovation. An elevated sense of artistic authorship became particularly transparent in the case of his lawsuit against Narumiya International. When challenged by the very systems that he has openly colluded with, Murakami vociferously defended the authorship of his *anime* designs and espoused the need for society to 'recognise the value of the originality of art'.⁷⁸ His position is particularly reactionary in the context of his own appropriations, for example his relentless mining of Warhol's practice, from DOB's mickey-mouse features to the art 'factory' to the title of *My Lonesome Cowboy*. He was overt in using *otaku* characters as models for sculptures such as *Hiropon* and in his use of the *Time Bokan* mushroom cloud. 'Super flat' thus justifies a cynical approach to consumer culture while simultaneously elevating Murakami's practice above that culture. And rather than empowering the alienated, empty subjects of the super flat condition, Murakami's design exploits and profits from them, bringing Adorno's nightmares to life.

While providing important insights, Adorno's reading of the culture industry is hard to use productively. Andreas Huyssen suggests that a classical reading of the culture industry 'can only lead to resignation or moralising about universal manipulation and domination'.⁷⁹ Huyssen also criticises Adorno for relegating the consumer to passivity, arguing that his reading focuses so much on exchange-value that it fails to acknowledge the potential use-value of commodities. It is easy for the term use-value to be randomly applied. In Marxist terms, use-value refers to the material qualities of a commodity, as opposed to its economic or social value. It is simply 'the satisfaction of wants', in terms of real, physical desires (rather than the constructed desires of consumer culture).⁸⁰ The use-value of an object, in this sense, is unrelated to the abstract process of exchange. Marx writes, 'A thing can be useful, and the product of human labour, without being a commodity. Whoever directly satisfies his wants with the produce of his own labour, creates, indeed, use-values but not commodities.'⁸¹ This is not to suggest that artworks escape commodification simply by having a use. Instead, it is important to consider how they might focus on a more direct engagement with consumer desire in order to resist the commodity's commercial function and reification.

Huyssen suggests that Adorno's over-emphasis on spectacle and exchange is at the expense of considering the agency of 'real' or material needs and production. This reference to use-value signals the possibility of an engaged and active, as opposed to cynical, consumption of commodities. Thinking

about artworks in terms of use-value attempts to avoid the exchange-based consumption of art. While there are clear links between Miller's position and this sense of engaged consumption, Huyssen's criteria for a work of art being 'emancipatory' is its 'practical uselessness'.⁸² Like Miller, he thereby falls short of considering an artistic participation in the spaces of production. He limits the productive use of design and architectural devices in art practices that question and might mis-design the systems of consumer culture.⁸³

In this context it is interesting to look at Adorno's influential paper, 'Functionalism Today', first presented to a group of architects in 1965.⁸⁴ In the paper, Adorno argues that the art object is beyond an antithesis of use and uselessness, that it has both social and aesthetic value. He doesn't, however, disregard the conflict between function and aesthetics in art, proclaiming, 'The obscure secret of art is the fetishistic character of goods and wares. Functionalism would like to break out of this entanglement; and yet, it can only rattle its chains in vain as long as it remains trapped in an entangled society.'⁸⁵ Again Adorno presents a somewhat impossible predicament in reconciling functionalism with art production, and exchange with use. He does, however, present a moment of hope in his brief discussion of the relationship between use-value and exchange-value, where he suggests that freedom lies in individual desire, which he relates to use-value. He suggests, 'Even in the false needs of a human being there lives a bit of freedom. It is expressed in what economic theory once called the "use value" as opposed to the "exchange value."⁸⁶ In this sense, use-value signals the desire for liberation from the alienating systems of capital, although still within the terms of capitalist production.

For Marx, of course, use-value can never be realised in the systems of capitalist production, which will always abstract real needs and desires. His socialist revolution, however, did not see beyond the systems of industrial production, and so the concept of use-value has persisted as a mirage. As Baudrillard observes in his critique of Marx, *The Mirror of Production*, 'Marx made a radical critique of political economy, but still in the form of political economy.'⁸⁷ Adorno suggests at the end of 'Functionalism Today' that the work of art should not shy away from its conflict between function and autonomy. He argues: 'A work must cut through the contradictions and overcome them, not by covering them up, but by pursuing them.'⁸⁸ Faced with a somewhat uncompromising artistic position, it is not surprising that contemporary artists might be prepared to compromise a degree of critical autonomy in order to engage more openly with systems of production.

In his text, *Art Incorporated* (2004), Julian Stallabrass also champions the potential of use-value in navigating a way out from the cynical postmodern condition. Arguing that artistic 'freedom' is no longer possible, he suggests the only way to escape the convoluted contemporary market is through art that has a direct political use, at the direct expense of artistic freedom. He

moves away from Marx's definition of use-value as the satisfaction of wants, aligning it instead with an ambiguous political directive. He writes, 'In these circumstances, it is works of evident use that press on the contradictions inherent in the system of art, that seek to liberate themselves from capital's servitude. To break with the supplemental autonomy of free art is to remove one of the masks of free trade.'⁸⁹ Stallabrass turns again to internet art in demonstrating his point, citing only one non-net artist in his discussion. This emphasis on art with political use has been embraced beyond this specialised media, however, as evident for example in the exhibition and publication *Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*. While the curators claimed that the politics were 'subdued', they nevertheless compared the project to that of the Russian constructivists, and described, 'this new wave of useful artistry functions as an ideal model for acts of civil disobedience'.⁹⁰ While these positions are certainly more productive than artistic resignation, the advocacy of no less than 'propaganda' overlooks a few complexities.⁹¹ In the current condition, as Naomi Klein so effectively argues, the sphere of politics has been displaced into the world of marketing.⁹²

This is a world of desire, not overt ideology. As Slavoj Žižek observes in his examination of contemporary ideology, 'The ruling ideology is not meant to be taken seriously or literally.'⁹³ Artists can advocate political agendas as much as they like, but the effect is likely to be muted unless moved into a political context, particularly if the gallery next door is showcasing the merging of art and fashion using imagery of semi-naked fashion models. More problematically, this stance puts art at the service of any political agenda, thus evacuating its critical, reflective capacities. This was a lesson learnt in the early twentieth century through the utopian endeavours of modern artists such as the constructivists.⁹⁴ Just as the *interventionists* might offer 'how-to' guides for civil disobedience, other artistic groups can similarly configure 'how-to' guides for less appealing political agendas, an obvious example in the current political climate being the instructional guides of various terrorist groups. More subtly, Murakami's project might be configured as a 'how-to' guide for consumer-capitalism. Eliminating the tension between function and aesthetics, such projects eradicate the critical space needed to question, rather than determine, the complex motivations and desires that drive the contemporary social machine. Again, they cut short the productive manipulation of design and architectural practices that create critical spaces inside – rather than in opposition to – the commercial sphere.

One of the common criticisms of Adorno's analysis is that it belies a modernist nostalgia for the separation of 'high' and 'low' art, and the essentialist concepts of aesthetic autonomy that such distinctions imply. Adorno acknowledges this contradiction, however, in an interesting question that he

raises, but does not answer: 'It is a delicate question whether the liquidation of aesthetic intrication and development represents the liquidation of every last trace of resistance or rather the medium of its secret omnipresence.'⁹⁵ Huyssen, for his part, disputes the assumed opposition of the two, arguing that art and mass culture have always been dialectically related. He presents the merging of mass culture and art as a ground of potential opportunity rather than loss, and attempts to provide a reading that is both critical and affirmative. Refuting that this implies a revival of the concept of the avant-garde, he suggests that contemporary artists should instead, 'take up the historical avant-garde's insistence on the cultural transformation of everyday life and from there develop strategies for today's cultural and political context'.⁹⁶ Rather than suggesting a revival of modernism as a solution to the postmodern condition, he promotes instead the spaces between modernism and mass culture, maintaining a distinctive space for art. He writes, 'the point is not to eliminate the productive tension between the political and the aesthetic ... the point is to heighten that tension'.⁹⁷ This dialectical position, between political resistance and participation in mass culture, is also the starting point for Miller's advocacy of consumer agency. In his terms, 'the means of living with an inevitable contradiction'.⁹⁸ Both Miller and Huyssen overlook the possibilities of production, or design, in shaping a critical space within the systems of late capital. Taking the alienating effects of production as an inevitability, consumption can only console, rather than challenge, the contemporary consumer.

As Murakami's work demonstrates, design often sidesteps criticality by emphasising form and style, as evident in the aesthetic focus of 'super flat'. This reflects a wider problem in design discourse, which tends to take commercial collusion for granted. As Abby Mellick Lopes writes, 'Design and its concomitant discourses, schools, and commissions developed within a market model whereby designers became collaborators with industry for the purpose of manufacturing and promoting goods for sale.'⁹⁹ This tendency for design to uncritically serve the interests of commerce is dangerous not only for design. In the context of a cultural sphere where art is rapidly losing ground to the money and appeal of commercial production, it signals the potential obsolescence of critical artistic practices altogether. Accused of resignation in the face of total domination, Adorno maintained that there is a possibility for change within the totality of the culture industry, but that it lies in the practice of critical thought rather than in opposition or reform: 'Open thinking points beyond itself. For its part, such thinking takes a position as a figuration of praxis.'¹⁰⁰ Admittedly, the concept of 'open thought' is a vague starting point for artists wanting to engage with the complexities of current socio-economic systems. Yet Adorno points to a productive compromise between autonomy and practice. In the context of contemporary art, this is emerging in critical practices that inhabit the systems of production, that is, design.

The crime of design

The distinction between art and design has been a contentious issue throughout the twentieth century, from early attempts to unify the disciplines, found in movements such as De Stijl and the Bauhaus, to minimalism and conceptualism's questioning of the art object itself. It is the lack of distinction between art and commercial design that seems to be at issue, as exemplified in this comment from a reviewer in *ArtReview*: 'This state of affairs is making it very difficult to decide what should be put in a home or in a design museum; at a dining-room table or behind bullet-proof glass for safekeeping.'¹⁰¹ A brief survey of major international and local exhibitions certainly demonstrates the increasing presence of design forms, ideas and concerns in the context of the visual arts. For example, the 2004 Venice Biennale contained a whole curatorial project devoted to the experimental design of objects from everyday life, titled 'The Everyday Altered'.¹⁰² The press release for the 2002 Liverpool Biennial likewise listed 'totally designed environments' as a key area of its thematic content.¹⁰³ 2004, a major survey of Australian contemporary art, not only contained a proliferation of works informed by design aesthetics and concepts but also cited numerous works by those explicitly labeled 'designers', including fashion designers Breathless Selfh, Easton Pearson and Toni Maticewski.¹⁰⁴

To return to the basic definition of design as 'mental plan' provides an important reminder of the inherent relationship between design and conceptual thought. This broader sense of design, beyond the aesthetic discipline shaped by modernism, is of increasing importance in the context of a global, digital landscape that is constantly in a process of being conceived and planned. This understanding of design, as Margolin observed, 'can now be seen at the core of all our conceptions and plans for our personal and collective social lives.'¹⁰⁵ Similarly, contemporary art involves the conception and planning of objects, experiences, performances, spaces and images. Even in the case of artists emphasising a certain spontaneity, such as in the case of interventionists and fluxus artists, most artistic situations are designed and framed for a gallery or artistic audience and are used by systems of commercial art for publicity and marketing purposes. While such practices might provide an apparent escape from the systems of art, the illusion of escape actually disguises the underlying branding, marketing and commodification of art in the economic systems of cultural production. Contemporary art is design, as Alex Coles argues in *DesignArt*.¹⁰⁶ In *Design and Crime* (2002), Hal Foster launches an attack on this proliferation of design in art, architecture and cultural practice. Revisiting Adolf Loos's influential modernist essay of 1908, 'Ornament and Crime', he looks at the dangers posed to art and criticism with the increasing interconnection of art, architecture and design in contemporary consumer culture.

Foster likens this interdisciplinarity to Loos's criticism of excessive ornamentation in Art Nouveau, suggesting:

This old debate takes on a new resonance today, when the aesthetic and the utilitarian are not only conflated but all but subsumed in the commercial, and everything – not only architectural projects and art exhibitions but everything from jeans to genes – seems to be regarded as so much *design*.¹⁰⁷

He doesn't advocate a puritanical stance of artistic 'autonomy' in response to these changes, however. Instead, he proposes 'some sense of the historical dialectic of critical disciplinarity and its contestation – to attempt again to provide culture with running room'.¹⁰⁸

Foster recounts the effects of the combination of design and life in Art Nouveau, describing how it 'commingles subject and object', and leads to a profound lack of difference or distinction.¹⁰⁹ The confusion of art and design in contemporary art practice, he suggests, is likewise leading to a 'regressive indistinction', compromising subjectivity itself. He argues, 'design seems to advance a new kind of narcissism, one that is all image and no interiority – an apotheosis of the subject that is also its potential disappearance'.¹¹⁰ Foster's analysis hits on many truths, especially in describing the disappearance of criticality within contemporary art practice. His accusations, however, seem to sideline the underlying issue of concern; that the all-encompassing homogenisation of culture has been brought about by late capitalism, not by the aesthetic field of design. It is not design that is the culprit, in this sense, but capital. Using Adolf Loos's essay on ornamentation is misleading. Loos's essay mentions nothing of artistic autonomy or criticality. Instead, it laments the negative effects that ornamentation had on modernist progress and defends capitalist productivity. Loos wrote, for example, 'The worker's time and the material employed are capital goods that are wasted'.¹¹¹ While Foster's re-reading was more a literary device than a detailed analysis, his equation of ornament with design was misplaced. There is a fundamental distinction between ornament and design – design is entwined with use and production.

Foster's dismissal of the utilitarian stands at the other end of the spectrum from Stallabrass's total advocacy of use-value. It denies a potentially productive artistic engagement, between design and ornament, between use and uselessness, and with the design process. How, for example, might design be reconfigured by artists to create the very 'running room' that Foster suggests its presence destroys? By overlooking how the presence of design in contemporary art is an artistic response to the contemporary socio-economic system, Foster's analysis reduces all design to critical impotence. While acknowledging that 'it is difficult to imagine a politics today that does not negotiate the market somehow',¹¹² the artistic strategies Foster proposes in response do not involve engaging with the market. Instead, the

aesthetic qualities he describes include traumatic experience, spectrality, nonsynchronous forms and the incongruent, as artistic means of 'living on' and as 'making-new or simply a making-do with what-comes-after'.¹¹³ This somewhat melancholic view resonates with Benjamin Buchloh's analysis of spectacle culture, particularly in his readings of Gerhard Richter.¹¹⁴ Yet Foster presupposes that such effects cannot be found in objects of design.

It is reductive to dismiss a work on the basis of its function and likewise on its engagement with design. While the presence of interior design, fashion design and architecture in contemporary art does signal the pervasiveness of consumer culture, the temptation to react by reducing the field of design to commerce denies the underlying similarity between art and design in the commercial sphere. Pinpointing design as the 'criminal' in the breakdown of the distinction between art and commercial spheres misplaces the underlying issue of the total design of contemporary culture. It is important, however, to identify where this represents the 'loss' of critique and freedom of production. A critical evaluation of the role of design can thus be configured as a means to salvage the field of critical art from complete subsumption in the commercial sphere. The issue is not what separates art from design but how, in a landscape where design morphs into art and art morphs into design, critical artistic practices might be producing unexpected and potentially subversive effects. In other words, does the future of critical art lie in the terms of non-commercial design?

Rehabilitation?

Out of the paradoxical ashes of postmodernism rose the neo-Marxist manifesto, *Empire* (2000). In this influential text, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri use the term to describe the current global world order. In their analysis, the current version of Empire is not presented as a repetition of the traditional patterns of the historical empire. It is, they argue, a new condition, one that 'not only manages a territory and a population but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions but also seeks directly to rule over human nature.'¹¹⁵ In many ways, despite its appearance as a radical new insight into the current social condition, *Empire* is an extension of Adorno's theorisation of the culture industry, repositioned in the context of the early twenty-first century and therefore taking into account the effects of globalisation. The influence of Adorno is clear, for example, when they write:

In the postmodernisation of the global economy, the creation of wealth tends ever more toward what we will call biopolitical production, the production of social life itself, in which the economic, the political, and the cultural increasingly overlap and invest one another.¹¹⁶

Unlike Adorno, however, Hardt and Negri maintain that while this system may seem all-defeating and oppressive, there lies within its structure room for resistance. Liberation, they suggest, can be effected through the internal reorganisation of its processes.¹¹⁷ In this sense they make no pretext of opposition, suggesting 'postmodern liberation must be achieved within this world, on the plane of imminence, with no possibility of any even utopian outside'.¹¹⁸ It is from this internal position that contemporary art practices emerge.

The exact means of reorganising Empire are not presented by Hardt and Negri. Instead they anticipate an internal resistance, one that they describe as both individual and collective. They write, 'We need a force capable not only of organising the destructive capacities of the multitude, but also constituting through the desires of the multitude an alternative.'¹¹⁹ Is it possible that through opening up existing modes of consumption to scrutiny, and by producing alternative modes of consumption, artists could have a part to play in salvaging postmodern subjectivity? At the very least, this more optimistic appraisal suggests that artists can carve out spaces within contemporary culture to pause and think. In their focus on production, individual agency and desire, Hardt and Negri effectively reconcile Adorno's critical stance with Deleuze and Guattari's traversal of capitalist space. This is evident in their statement, 'Production becomes indistinguishable from reproduction ... Social subjects are at the same time producers and products of this unitary machine.'¹²⁰ If social subjects can be positioned as producers of the systems of consumer culture, and not merely as passive consumers, then creative production can, in this sense, result in more than the prevalence of 'so much design'. Further, they argue that it is through 'material existence' that the structures of Empire can be renegotiated. Using the metaphor of the barbarian, they write: 'The new barbarians destroy with an affirmative violence and trace new paths of life through their own material existence.'¹²¹

A new sense of political optimism has been prevalent in artistic practices of the late 1990s and early twenty first century that focus on human agency and the realisation of utopian visions. This has translated into a focus on the relations between people, as evident in the popular embrace of Nicholas Bourriaud's text *Relational Aesthetics*. Bourriaud advocates artwork that enables human interaction and engagement.¹²² Building upon the ideals of the modern avant-garde, he suggests that by turning art toward a humanistic use-value, contemporary artists can actualise their utopian ambitions. He writes, 'the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real'.¹²³ Bourriaud's theory finds form in artistic practices that configure art spaces as a means for social enfranchisement, for example in the work of Rirkrit Tirvanija, well known for configuring the space of the gallery as a communal kitchen. While certainly more hopeful than Murakami's cynical approach to consumer

agency, Bourriaud's analysis falls prey to the same modernist dilemmas regarding function and autonomy. As with the problem of use-value, artworks that rely on a harmonious engagement from the viewer tend to eliminate the critical space needed to consider and reflect upon the work. This forms the basis of Claire Bishop's critique of relational aesthetics, where she argues that artistic enfranchisement results in the loss of democratic debate. Bishop writes, 'a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are *sustained*, not erased'.¹²⁴ Like Huyssen, she argues that artwork should maintain a tension between engaging with culture and reflecting upon it.

Importantly, Bourriaud's idealistic position overlooks the ways in which the relations between people are also subject to late capitalism's design. And these human relations are designed through products. An emphasis on relational aesthetics, on strategies of social enfranchisement, is emerging in the context of commercial design. The directive, however, has been far from emancipatory. Rather than configuring human relations as a means to escape the alienating effects of the consumer world, design discourse has been considering how such strategies can be employed to capture consumers all the more completely within the cycle of consumption.¹²⁵ For example, in 1995 design theorist Gianfranco Zacconi boldly redefined design aesthetics as 'the appropriate and harmonious balancing of all user needs and wants within technical and social constraints'.¹²⁶ This conception of relational aesthetics is hardly utopian – *within technical and social constraints* – pointing to the role of design in controlling human interaction. Commercial design is thereby using relational aesthetics as a means to shape the way people consume. This has been a focus of technological design for some time, as evident in the emergence of messaging and communication technologies, which design and mediate the ways in which people connect to each other. As Mellick Lopes notes, 'The lives of products are more cultural than technical and have more to do with engineering relationships and situations between people than in delivering functions.'¹²⁷

Artistic practices that focus on human engagement thus provide a utopian mirage, with the positive relations produced in the space of the gallery inadvertently masking the ways that human relations are manipulated and shaped by commodities elsewhere. As Žižek argues, it is the products of contemporary culture and 'the social relations between things' that now carry and demonstrate the social power relations between people.¹²⁸ It is therefore through production that social systems can be most effectively examined, questioned, and critiqued. After all, systems of production are ravenously examining, questioning and profiting from human relations. This is evident across the fields of design, art and architecture. As Julia Schulz-Dornburg writes, 'We are all now objects of desire. Our daily routines are analysed, every little escapade the object of investigation. Our histories are researched and our desires annotated.'¹²⁹

In this context, relational art faces the danger of being used by systems of production to disguise the design of soul, body and mind.¹³⁰

Other artists have been exploring these issues through design, combining relational aesthetics with the creation of products. Lucy Orta, for example, designs clothing that attempts to solve social problems. Her *Refuge Wear* series of clothing, developed in the 1990s, consisted of clothing that converted into tent-like temporary shelter. In addition, the works could be connected together, relational-aesthetics-style, to encourage human interaction, in the form of *Collective Dwelling* (1998/1999). For such artists, use-value points to that little bit of freedom that Adorno likewise alluded to in 'Functionalism Today'. It holds the promise of liberating consumers from the fetishised realms of consumer culture, focusing on addressing fundamental human needs such as shelter. While still conforming to systems of 'value' and production, as discussed in relation to Marx, such projects at least acknowledge the political and conceptual foundations of design. This is an important and often overlooked point. As Richard Buchanan observes, 'Design is the art of shaping arguments about the artificial or human-made world.'¹³¹ Design discussion in the contemporary sphere all too easily turns to methodology and style instead of considering these sociological and political foundations. Artistic encounters with design are unique in foregrounding the critical and conceptual possibilities of the field.

Yet artists such as Orta still fail to resolve the problem of autonomy and function. Capitalism is very adept at manipulating the idea of use-value in order to perpetuate the cycle of production and consumption. What may begin as an affordable, humanitarian design in an art context easily morphs into an exclusive commodity in the hands of the market. Socially useful design is easily appropriated by capital and transformed into consumer products, elevated in status by their circulation within the art market. For Marx, once an object enters the market it loses all sense of use-value. He writes, for example, 'Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: Our use-value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects ... In the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange-values.'¹³² And so Orta's work, regardless of its intended use, is easily abstracted from this premise, as evident in Maria Cristina Tommasini's comments about the increasing 'product reality' of her practice:

Without betraying her social commitment, the proposals seem to probe technical detail and to open up to a more concrete product reality. Her collaboration with an Italian clothing manufacturer also suggests that Orta's work is departing from its experimental phase.¹³³

The problem with design, in this sense, is that it necessarily implies the creation of a commodity – commodification is the earth from which design practice emerges. As design theorist Victor Margolin acknowledges, 'we cannot

imagine a world without products'.¹³⁴ Just as capitalism strengthens and expands through the process of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, the consumer world expands through the constant de-design and re-design of the industrial world. More and less humanitarian versions of design are therefore going to emerge according to more and less humanitarian versions of capitalism.

If use-value cannot salvage design from its complicity with commerce it is because it overlooks the role of desire in determining consumer behaviour. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, 'Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire.'¹³⁵ Configuring desire in terms of needs and wants follows traditional understandings of desire as lack. The concept of desire has been of central importance to philosophy since the inception of psychoanalysis. Both Freud and Lacan interpret desire in terms of lack – for Freud, through the model of castration, and more explicitly for Lacan as *manqué*, for which the English translation is 'lack'. This conception of desire can be traced to Plato, who suggested 'man is not perfect *because* his Being is incomplete'.¹³⁶ Where desire is conceived of in these terms, it is neither productive nor liberatory. Instead, it is subjected to a constant search for, and failure to find, satisfaction. This is exploited by capitalism, which creates artificial desires in order to constantly produce new and ultimately unsatisfying consumer products. While making useful, humanitarian products might appear to provide an alternative to the proliferation of unnecessary designer goods, it still relies on the logic of capitalism – that needs, gaps, and absences should be filled with commodities.

The introductory paragraph of this chapter raised Krauss's criticisms of the tendency for works of art that cross different media to homogenise artistic practice and inadvertently serve the interests of capital. In her terms, 'becoming prey to the law of commodification, the separate work of art, as well as the separate mediums of art, enter the condition of general equivalency, thereby losing the uniqueness of the work'.¹³⁷ For Krauss, the reason for this turn away from a modernist and 'pure' art form came down to a reaction against the supposed self-sufficiency of the modernist medium. This autonomy, she argues, denies a fundamental insufficiency in both the material form of the medium and within the viewer. Any medium, Krauss suggests, is incomplete without some form of layering, even if only a single layer of paint on the surface of a canvas. Similarly, the viewer looks to an artwork in a desire to fill 'an unappeasable lack of self-sufficiency',¹³⁸ and thereby attain an experience suggestive of wholeness. Like Foster, Krauss turns her gaze to artworks that capture a sense of their own obsolescence – in this way, she suggests, they reveal the fundamental lack of both artwork and subject, thereby exposing the many layers that are involved in the artwork's creation.

The problem with directing desire and artistic practice to addressing an inherent lack, however, is that both art and desire lose their productive

potential. Art becomes the end point in a search for fulfilment, rather than an active process of creation, and desire becomes 'no more than the production of fantasy'.¹³⁹ This shortcuts their potential to actively transform the material world.

In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1977), Deleuze and Guattari overhaul this understanding of desire. Desire, in their terms, is not the satisfaction of a lack, but instead is a positive and productive flow, connecting bodies to the socius and the socius to its environment. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is behind and within all aspects of social production. Capitalism, they argue, attempts to control and structure desire, to turn it into lack. This is its secret – it makes us desire our own oppression – and accounts for the apparent futility of external attempts to 'oppose' it. They describe, for example, 'capitalism's supreme goal, which is to produce lack in the large aggregates, to introduce lack where there is always too much'.¹⁴⁰ By controlling our desires in this way, we come to desire its oppressive grasp. Capitalism, they write, is 'a machine that is not only technical but social, and through which desire desires its own repression'.¹⁴¹ Escaping capitalism, they argue, can only occur via the liberation of unconscious desire. In their words, 'returning production itself to desire'.¹⁴² This opens the possibility of engaging with commercial production in creative and unexpected ways. And so they describe art, not in terms of obsolescence and memorialisation, but as 'so many local fires patiently kindled for a generalised explosion'.¹⁴³

It is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari are purposefully elusive when it comes to pinpointing a definition of desire. Where capitalism attempts to determine and direct desire, Deleuze and Guattari deterritorialise the concept.¹⁴⁴ As a flow that connects everything, it is physical, machinic, social and productive. While it is sexual and bodily, it does not merely imply chaotic sexual energy – it compels production, it is creative and social. In this sense, desire is real and physical, and it produces real material objects.¹⁴⁵ Most importantly, it does not refer to the fetishised desires of consumer culture; constructs which feed and reinforce lack. In *Anti-Oedipus*, they interrelate Marx's examination of capitalism with Freud's examination of the unconscious, arguing that the social field is invested with psychological drives. As a result, effective revolutionary activity will not be found in violent uprisings, as Marx proposed, but in analysing the psychological drives invested in social production, or in their terms, 'schizoanalysis'.¹⁴⁶

Art presents itself as a natural ally in this endeavour with its unique capacity to explore and uncover social investments of desire. This potential was hinted at, for example, in Murakami's works *My Lonesome Cowboy* and *Hiropon*. Flows of desire, in the form of seminal fluid and breast milk, were made literal in the production of a commodity. Murakami's works did not

liberate human desire, however, by destroying or challenging the fetishism of *otaku* culture with real manifestations of bodily drives. Instead, the bodily fluids were made plastic, stylised into a lasso and rope. In this sense, the characters became ensnared within socially manipulated desire. They were then placed before the consumer as objects of consumption, perpetuating the consumer's sense of lacking. Lusting after such distorted objects of fantasy, desire could only be experienced vicariously through the consumption of images and products.

Murakami found himself similarly ensnared by his desire to participate in the free-for-all of the consumer market. This was most evident when he battled Narumiya International. Seeking the riches of late capital, Murakami sacrificed the critical autonomy of his artistic practice for commercial viability. This, in turn, made him vulnerable to reappropriation, such that his 'art' became Narumiya's next range of merchandise. When he discovered his powerlessness in this cycle, he reverted to an assertion of the value of the originality of art and culture. In turn, he negated the premise of his artistic practice, which in fact relies upon appropriation. Trapped in a machine of his own making, he had no choice but to turn to another social system – the law – to find salvation. The legal case stopped Narumiya International from using one DOB-like character, however it did not prevent them using four other characters with very similar characteristics. Murakami thereby exemplifies the insidious power of late capitalism; inadvertently desiring his own oppression, he fuels the system that devours his work. Uncovering this trap is one of the functions of Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, which aims 'to analyse the specific nature of the libidinal investments in the economic and political spheres, and thereby to show how, in the subject who desires, desire can be made to desire its own repression'.¹⁴⁷ The cycle of commercial appropriation exposed in the Narumiya lawsuit could have opened up an interesting point of critique – providing a starting point for an exploration of late capital. Instead, Murakami limited this engagement with the commercial sphere by denying his role as a producer and reverting to his affirmation of the originality of his art.

Art's tendency to repress its relationship with production by asserting autonomy, in this sense, limits its capacity to truly engage with, and misdirect, these systems. Artistic practices positioned within the systems of production, however, are in a unique position to mislead the design process and shift the focus of production away from its commercial outcome. For Deleuze and Guattari, this involves inserting an element of natural dysfunction into production. They write, 'The artist is the master of objects; he puts before us shattered, burned, broken-down objects, converting them to the regime of desiring-machines.'¹⁴⁸ So how might artists configure design as dysfunction?

Mis-design

It is important to acknowledge that 'design' implies a predetermined result, namely the creation of a product, and this determining aspect has an impact on its critical potential. No matter how creative and misleading the idea behind a design might be, the resulting product can be used to perpetuate the systems of capital. As Denis Hollier writes, 'Nothing that has anything to do with plans counts, because plans fall short of desire and suppress it.'¹⁴⁹ Yet design is first and foremost a process of conceiving and creating, and this process has the potential to disrupt its premised result. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, 'the specificity of the product tends to evaporate, while at the same time the possibility of another outcome, another end result of the process appears'.¹⁵⁰ The critical potential of art's collusion with design lies in the capacity for the design process to subvert the commercial outcome of production. When plans give way to the process of conceiving and thinking, then desire can disrupt the systems of production in unexpected ways. Susan Yalevich alludes to this when she discusses design that maintains a degree of uncertainty. She writes, 'Uncertainty has its virtues: it breeds iconoclasm, opening up space for the personal, the crafted, and, most thankfully, in our paved-over world, the unpredictable.'¹⁵¹ Indeterminacy is another means by which to misdirect the outcome-based focus of production. Marx has also described this capacity for dysfunction to reveal the systems of production, writing 'A knife which fails to cut, a piece of thread which keeps on snapping, forcibly remind us of Mr A, the cutler, of Mr B, the spinner. In a successful product, the role played by past labour in mediating its useful properties has been extinguished.'¹⁵² It is the unsuccessful products, therefore, that expose the role played by labour.

Elizabeth Grosz likewise alludes to a sense of mis-design in *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely* (2005), her examination of the relationship between politics, culture and history. Arguing that political change needs to be considered in terms of the unexpected, she describes 'a future we cannot directly recognise, a future that does not simply extend our current needs and wants *but may actively transform them in ways we may not understand or control*'.¹⁵³ Here, Grosz shares Deleuze and Guattari's adoption of a more Nietzschean approach to utility, where use-value gives way to the unexpected and productive possibilities of biological drives and desire. Nietzsche advocates, for example, 'The absolute necessity of a total liberation from ends ... Only the innocence of becoming gives us the greatest courage and the greatest freedom.'¹⁵⁴

Unleashed in the field of commercial design, artists have a unique capacity to mis-direct the commercial directives of social production. This involves disregarding the formal distinction between visual art and design, and instead looking at art as a critical practice within the designed landscape of both art and commerce. Where Krauss argues that intermedia practices

necessarily collude with the homogenising tendencies of capital, Deleuze and Guattari see art as inherently disruptive, regardless of the medium. Deleuze argues this point in *Negotiations*, suggesting that disruptive art practices can traverse several media. It is not the form that counts, in this sense, so much as its effect. He writes, 'Different modes of expression may have different creative possibilities, but they're all related insofar as they must counter the introduction of a cultural space of markets and conformity.'¹⁵⁵ While projects may appear under the guise of commercial design, this does not negate their function as critical artistic practices. Art is self-sufficient, in this sense, not as a discipline, medium or aesthetic category of its own, but as a moving, changing and unpredictable process occurring on the inside of commercial culture. A practice that turns away from concerns about function, utility and form, and towards the domain of dysfunction, experimentation and creative production.

Contemporary art's inter-relationship with design does not negate its creative and critical spirit. In order to distinguish between critique and Murakami-style cynicism, however, each case of apparent 'collusion' needs to be evaluated on its own terms. This involves a contextually and historically specific style of analysis and critique. In a world where all art can be considered design, this approach is also needed in the traditional institutions of art, where collusions between art, fashion, design and commerce are equally prevalent. The key to escaping the alienating effects of contemporary consumer culture, with its hyperreal landscape, abstraction of needs and apparently all encompassing immanence, does not lie in ignoring or refusing production. Likewise, contemporary art cannot retain space for critical thought and independent practice by ignoring its commercial complicity. While an 'alternative' to late capitalism is hardly imaginable, artists are working within its systems to question its manipulation of social, human and object relations. This does not involve opposing consumerism from an 'outside' position, but rather exploring its internal operations and misdirecting its outcomes. At times this results in collusion, as evident in the example of Murakami. Yet in the contemporary marketplace, collusion and subversion are necessarily intertwined. This allows for other, more productive artistic practices that maintain the tension between art and culture, refusing to give way to the cynical sway of contemporary consumer-capitalism. The following chapters explore the ways in which Zittel, Kalkin and Acconci are mis-directing the design process to reveal the psychological dynamics of social production, thereby creating critical spaces within commercial culture for consumers to question the systems and effects of capitalist production.

This involves a shift in perspective away from the politics of consumption and the emancipatory capacity of use-value towards the potential of engaged production that uncovers the psychological role of desire in the systems of late capitalism.

Notes

1. Hiroki Azuma, 'Super Flat speculation', in *DOB in the Strange Forest*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppan-Sha, Ltd, 1999), n.p.
2. Takashi Murakami, 'Life as a Creator', in *Summon Monsters? Open the Door? Heal? Or Die?*, eds Kaikai Kiki Co. & MCA (Saitama-Ken: Kaikai Kiki Co, 2002), 134.
3. Rosalind Krauss, '*A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*' (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 15.
4. Andy Warhol, cited in Grunenberg et al., *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 9.
5. Krauss, '*A Voyage on the North Sea*', 15.
6. Magda Keaney, 'Fashion: Art and Fashion Photography', *Photofile*, no. 65, May 2002 (Sydney: Australian Centre for Photography).
7. See also Alice Mackrell's publication *Art and Fashion* (London: Batsford, 2005).
8. Naomi Klein, *No Logo, No Space, No Choice, No Jobs: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (London: Flamingo, 2000), 118.
9. See Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Chicago; Cambridge, MA: Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts; MIT Press, 1996) and Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (New York: New Press, 2002).
10. Chin-tao Wu, *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s* (London; New York: Verso, 2002), 267.
11. Fredric Jameson, 'Notes on Globalisation as a Philosophical Issue', in *The Cultures of Globalization*, eds Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 74.
12. Jurgen Habermas, 'Modernity – an Incomplete Project', in *Art in Theory, 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 1,130.
13. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St Louis, MO: Telos Press, 1981), 173. Benjamin Buchloh also describes the effect of the postmodern globalisation of the art market, arguing that the embrace of techniques from the consumer world can easily lend itself to affirmations of capitalist systems, claiming, 'It implies that even the mere thought and the slightest gesture of opposition appear dwarfed and ludicrous in the face of the totalitarian control and domination by spectacle.' See Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), xxi–xxii.
14. Hal Foster, 'Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism', *October*, no. 100 (Spring 2002): 31.
15. Benjamin Buchloh, in 'Round Table', *October*: 29.
16. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London, New York: Continuum, 2004; Originally published Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Press, 1987), 352.
17. Yusuke Miname, 'Takashi Murakami Strikes Back', in *Summon Monsters?*, 63.
18. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 109.
19. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. I, ed. Friedrich Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974), 83.
20. Takashi Murakami, 'Life as a Creator', in *Summon Monsters?*, 138.
21. Bome, cited in Murakami, 'Life as a Creator', *Summon Monsters?*, 139. Murakami describes Bome as 'the king of the figure character world' (*Summon Monsters?*, 139).
22. Murakami, 'Life as a Creator', *Summon Monsters?*, 140.
23. The publication, a critical survey of the relationship between design and art over the last century, thus inadvertently advertised a leading fashion brand on its bright and colourful cover. See Coles, *DesignArt* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005).

24. Amanda Cruz, 'DOB in the Land of Otaku', in Takashi Murakami et al., *Takashi Murakami: The Meaning of the Nonsense of the Meaning* (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Center for Curatorial Studies Museum Bard College; In association with Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 14.
25. Rosalind Krauss, 'Carnal Knowledge', in *Andy Warhol*, ed. Annette Michaelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 117.
26. Warhol, 'Interview with Gene Swenson', in *Art in Theory, 1900–2000*, p. 748. Contrasting his commercial images of sameness with his films is useful here; his films do not celebrate mainstream culture, instead proliferating marginal characters and reveling in the edges of social conduct and lifestyle. When he lamented, 'Everybody just goes on thinking the same thing, and every year it gets more and more alike. Those who talk about individuality the most are the ones who most object to deviation', his desire for differentiation becomes evident ('Interview with Gene Swenson', p. 749).
27. Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, 514.
28. Jim Frederick, 'Move Over, Andy Warhol: Painter, Sculptor, Cartoonist and Handbag King Takashi Murakami Hits It big by Marrying Art and Commerce', *Time International*, vol. 161, no. 21 (2003): 42.
29. Murakami, cited in 'Interview with Takashi Murakami by Helen Kelmachter', Kaikai Kiki, exh. cat., ed. Takashi Murakami (Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, 2002).
30. Klein, *No Logo*, 3.
31. Michel Foucault, 'Preface to Transgression', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977).
32. Frederick, 'Move Over, Andy Warhol', 42.
33. Kaikai Kiki Co., 'Press release regarding the amicable settlement of contemporary artist Takashi Murakami's lawsuit regarding a breach of copyright' [website] (Kaikai Kiki Co. [cited 8 August 2006]; available from www.kaikaikiki.co.jp/regarding_the_amicable_settlement).
34. See 'Designer Takashi Murakami Settles Copyright Lawsuit with Clothes Maker', *Mainichi Daily News* (25 April 2006).
35. Boris Groys, 'The Artist as Consumer', in Christoph Grunenberg et al., *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*, 59–60 [my emphasis].
36. Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 121.
37. Warhol claimed, 'I want it to be *exactly* the same', in Luthy, 'The Consumer Article in the Art World: On the Para-Economy of American Pop', in *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*, 152.
38. Paul Mattick, 'Takashi Murakami at Marianne Boesky', *Art in America*, vol. 92, no. 1 (2004): 107.
39. This is clear in Cruz's statement, 'Murakami's uncritical stance toward capitalism is perhaps typical of his generation.' Cruz, 'DOB in the Land of Otaku', 16.
40. Cruz, 'DOB in the Land of Otaku', 18.
41. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994) and Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967).
42. Midori Matsui, 'Toward a Definition of Tokyo Pop: The Classical Transgressions of Takashi Murakami', in Murakami et al., *Takashi Murakami: The Meaning of the Nonsense of the Meaning*, 27.
43. Matsui, 'Toward a Definition of Tokyo Pop', 23.
44. Matsui, 'Toward a Definition of Tokyo Pop', 28.
45. Press release for *Tokyo Girls Bravo* (Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York: 16 February–13 March 2004).
46. Press release for *Gallery Swap: Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin* (LFL Gallery, New York: 21 January–31 January 2004).
47. Murakami, 'Life as a Creator', *Summon Monsters?*, 146. He has also stated, 'Not only must we create artists, but we must also create a fan base for their art.' (Cited in David Pagel, 'Takashi Murakami: Meet Japan's Pop Art Samurai', *Interview*, March 2001, p. 90.)

48. The exhibition, *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*, was held at the Japan Society Gallery, New York from 8 April till 24 July 2005. Murakami also relates the project to a Hollywood-scale production, claiming 'Curating this exhibit was like filming a movie ... all of my stars have very strong personalities. I needed to get them to bring my screenplay to life.' (Cited in 'Takashi Murakami is all the Rage', in *Metro*, 8–10 April 2005.)
49. Murakami, 'Superflat Trilogy: Greetings, You Are Alive', in *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*, ed. Takashi Murakami (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2005), 158.
50. Roberta Smith, 'From a Mushroom Cloud, a Burst of Art Reflecting Japan's Psyche', *The New York Times* (Friday 8 April 2005).
51. See *Little Boy*, ed. Takashi Murakami.
52. Krauss, 'A Voyage on the North Sea', 15.
53. Claes Oldenburg, *Store Days* (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), 60.
54. Oldenburg, *Store Days*, 51.
55. Baudrillard, 'The Hyper-Realism of Simulation', in *Art in Theory: 1900–2000*, 1,018.
56. Julian Stallabrass, 'Shop Until You Stop', in *Shopping: A Century of Art and Consumer Culture*, 227.
57. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 551.
58. Deleuze and Guattari describe, for example, the homeless and the nomad as presenting smooth spaces within the striated space of the city. See *A Thousand Plateaus*, 551.
59. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 537. The term 'becoming' refers to a process of transformation in perception, and is fundamental in enabling difference.
60. Exhibition pamphlet, *Gregor Schneider: Dead House u r* (Los Angeles, CA: Museum of Contemporary Art; MOCA at the Geffen Contemporary, 12 October 2003–7 June 2004).
61. Of course, this contradictory practice of construction can likewise give rise to mimetic affirmation. If this practice is *ambiguous*, then perhaps it is a necessary ambiguity. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari write, 'The undecidable is the germ and locus par excellence of revolutionary decisions.' *A Thousand Plateaus*, 522.
62. Murakami, 'Life as a Creator', in *Summon Monsters?*, 142.
63. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption, Social Archaeology* (Oxford; New York: Wiley Blackwell, 1987), 205. He is very specific in arguing that consumption can redeem the effects of alienation, writing: 'Consumption is considered here as a process having the potential to produce an inalienable culture', 17.
64. This involves conforming to, rather than challenging, social systems. This is evident, for example, when Miller describes the effects of such social consumption: 'They help provide equalising and normative mechanisms promoting solidarity and sociability' (Miller, *Material Culture*, 199).
65. Miller, *Material Culture*, 215.
66. Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 546. See also William Chaloupka, *Everybody Knows: Cynicism in America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
67. Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, 546.
68. Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, 121.
69. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 86.
70. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 71.
71. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 9.
72. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 67.
73. Murakami, 'The Super Flat Manifesto', in *Superflat*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: MADRA Publishing, 2000), 5.
74. Murakami, 'The Super Flat Manifesto', 5.
75. Kaikai Kiki Co., 'Press release regarding the amicable settlement of contemporary artist Takashi Murakami's lawsuit regarding a breach of copyright.' [Website]

76. Murakami, 'Superflat Trilogy', in *Little Boy*, 153.
77. Murakami 'The Super Flat Manifesto', 20. In a separate interview, the theme of high-handed authorship emerges when he describes the process of designing *anime* characters including *Oval*. He claims, for example, 'I wanted, I think, to create my own "gods of art".' (Cited in 'Interview with Takashi Murakami by Helen Kelmacher.')
78. Kaikai Kiki Co., 'Press release regarding the amicable settlement of contemporary artist Takashi Murakami's lawsuit regarding a breach of copyright' [website].
79. Andreas Huyssen, *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 19.
80. Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 150.
81. Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 48. Marx writes, 'the use-value of objects is realised without exchange'. (Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 87.)
82. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 152.
83. Like Huyssen, Benjamin Buchloh argues for a dialectical reading of the culture industry and art production. Drawing on Guy Debord's description of the *Society of the Spectacle*, he warns against a revival of modernist distinctions or investing in the isolated subjectivity of the artist and the 'sacred' value of art. Buchloh is also reluctant to accept the prescriptive nature of an Adorno-style critique. He writes, 'resentment against contemporary culture at large could be linked with a leftist prejudice against any form of aesthetic deviance and transgression that did not comply with the prescribed patterns of the political models of critique' (Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, xxv–xxvi).
84. Theodor Adorno, 'Functionalism Today', in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997).
85. Adorno, 'Functionalism Today', 17.
86. Adorno, 'Functionalism Today', 16.
87. Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (St Louis, MO: Telos Press, 1975), 50.
88. Adorno, 'Functionalism Today', 19.
89. Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 201.
90. Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette, eds, *Interventionists* (North Adams, MA: MASS MoCA, 2004), 137. For a similar approach in the field of graphic design, see Milton Glaser, *Design of Dissent* (Gloucester, MA: Rockport Publishers, 2005).
91. Stallabrass is explicit, writing 'such art has clear propaganda value' (*Art Incorporated*, 199).
92. See Klein, *No Logo*.
93. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London; New York: Verso, 1989), 26.
94. Briony Fer makes this point through a description of Tatlin's infamous *Monument to the Third International* (1920), writing, 'Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*, envisaged as a great iron structure spiraling high over the Petrograd sky, a symbol of liberation. Yet we end with the metaphor of the 'iron cage' of modern culture.' ('Constructivism', in *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, eds Briony Fer, David Batchelor and Paul Wood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 167). See also Christina Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).
95. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 67.
96. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 7.
97. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 221.
98. Miller, *Material Culture*, 14.
99. Abby Mellick Lopes, 'The Politics of Design Conversations', in ed. Anne-Marie Willis, *Design Philosophy Papers: Collection One* (Ravensbourne, Qld.: Team D/E/S, 2004), 73.
100. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 175.
101. Helen Kirwan-Taylor, 'Art by Design', *ArtReview*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2004): 50.

102. Curated by Gabriel Orozco, this section did not overtly define itself with the label 'design'. All six artists, however, exhibited 'redesigned' objects, including an umbrella, a cigarette case, a fly electrocution device, a car and a tent. See Francesco Bonami and Maria Luisa Frisa, *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer: 50th International Art Exhibition* (Venice: Marsilio: La Biennale di Venezia, 2003), 301–15.
103. The Liverpool Biennial press release states: 'Some of the issues addressed by the artworks are – viral contamination, "spin" and the propagation of misinformation; media obsession and celebrity culture; identity manipulation; fantasy and hedonism; totally designed environments; privatisation; terrorism and catastrophe anxiety.' See Liverpool Biennial, *2002 Liverpool Biennial* [website] (Liverpool Biennial, 2002 [cited 8 October 2004]; available from www.biennial.org.uk/site.htm).
104. See Charles Green, 2004, exh. cat. (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2004). The exhibition of contemporary works at the NGV Australia, *Living Together Is Easy*, likewise demonstrated the influence of design, most notably in the design objects of the Japanese artist Tetsuya Nakamura, and to a lesser degree in the photographic work of Rosemary Laing and the sculptural work of Fiona Hall and Ricky Swallow. See Eriko Osaka and Mizuki Takahashi, *Living Together Is Easy*, National Gallery of Victoria; Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito, 26 August–7 November 2004.
105. Victor Margolin, 'The Product Milieu and Social Action', in *Discovering Design*, 141.
106. To repeat Coles' words, 'all art is designed even if it endeavours to appear otherwise'. Coles, *DesignArt*, 10.
107. Hal Foster, *Design and Crime: And Other Diatribes* (London: Verso, 2002), 17.
108. Foster, *Design and Crime*, xiv.
109. Foster, *Design and Crime*, 17.
110. Foster, *Design and Crime*, 25.
111. Adolf Loos, 'Ornament and Crime', in *Programs and Manifestoes: On 20th-Century Architecture*, Ulrich Conrads, ed. (London: Lund Humphries, 1964), 22.
112. Foster, *Design and Crime*, 61.
113. Foster, *Design and Crime*, 129.
114. Buchloh suggests that resistance to spectacle is to be located in the use of mnemonic structures, such as those employed by Gerhard Richter (Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, xxiv).
115. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2000), xv.
116. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, xiii.
117. Hardt and Negri describe the impossibility of an oppositional stance, writing 'the mere refusal of order simply leaves us on the edge of nothingness – or worse, these gestures risk reinforcing imperial power rather than challenging it'. *Empire*, 217.
118. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 65.
119. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 214.
120. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 385 [my emphasis].
121. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 215.
122. See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les presses du reel, 2002).
123. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 13. Bourriaud argues, 'Art is the place that produces a specific sociability', before asking, 'How is an art focused on the production of such forms of conviviality capable of re-launching the modern emancipation plan, by complementing it? How does it permit the development of new political and cultural designs?' (Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 16.)
124. Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, no. 110 (2004): 66. Bishop puts forward a model based on antagonism rather than enfranchisement, arguing: 'This relational antagonism would be predicated not on social harmony, but on exposing that which is repressed in sustaining the semblance of this harmony. It would thereby provide a more concrete and

- polemical grounds for rethinking our relationship to the world and to one other' ('Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', 79).
125. Strategies of social enfranchisement are evident across the board in marketing discourse relating to commercial design. There was much discussion on this topic, for example, at *Futureground*, a conference of the Design Research Institute held at Monash University in 2004. See *Futureground: International Conference 2004* (Melbourne: Monash University, Faculty of Art and Design, 2004).
 126. Gianfranco Zacconi, 'Art and Technology', in *Discovering Design*, 6.
 127. Abby Mellick Lopes, 'The Politics of Design Conversations', in *Design Philosophy Papers*, 73.
 128. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 25–6.
 129. Julia Schulz-Dornburg, *Art and Architecture: New Affinities*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, SA, 2000) 19.
 130. As Stallabrass argues, social powers 'look to art as a social salve, and hope that socially interactive art will act as bandaging for the grave wounds continually prised open by capital' (Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated*, 182).
 131. Richard Buchanan, 'Rhetoric, Humanism and Design', in *Discovering Design*, 46.
 132. Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 87.
 133. Maria Cristina Tommasini, 'Body Architectures, Survival Clothes', *Domus* (March 2000): 74.
 134. Margolin, 'The Product Milieu and Social Action', in *Discovering Design*, 121.
 135. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004), 28.
 136. See Hugh J. Silverman, *Philosophy and Desire* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 186.
 137. Krauss, 'A Voyage on the North Sea', 46.
 138. Krauss, 'A Voyage on the North Sea', 53.
 139. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 122.
 140. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 256.
 141. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 379.
 142. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 402.
 143. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 148.
 144. Like much post-structural theory, this is a *necessary* elusiveness. In order for desire to retain its disruptive function it needs to be unresolved, which presents a critical challenge. As Patrick Fuery writes, 'A major concern therefore is the problem of representing desire, given that by its very definition desire is beyond representation.' Fuery, *Theories of Desire* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1995), 2. Dorothea Olkowski argues that Deleuze and Guattari's conception of desire is described abstractly to ensure its creativity and diversity. (In 'Flows of Desire and the Body', in *Philosophy and Desire*, 187.)
 145. They are explicit about this point, writing: 'If desire produces, its product is real ... Desire always remains in close touch with the conditions of objective existence' (*Anti-Oedipus*, 28–9).
 146. They write, 'The task of schizoanalysis is therefore to reach the investments of unconscious desire in the social field.' (*Anti-Oedipus*, 383.)
 147. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 115.
 148. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 34.
 149. Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 46.
 150. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 26. Further, they argue, 'Production as process overtakes all idealistic categories and constitutes a cycle whose relationship to desire is that of an immanent principle' (*Anti-Oedipus*, 5).
 151. Susan Yalovich, 'Safety Nests', in *Safe: Design Takes On Risk*, exh. cat., ed. Paola Antonelli (New York, London: Museum of Modern Art and Thames & Hudson, 2005), 25.

152. Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 289. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, for an analysis of labour in capitalist production (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
153. Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and The Untimely* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 260 [my emphasis].
154. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 417, 787. Furthermore, Nietzsche proposes 'Utility and pleasure are slave theories of life: the "blessing of work" is the self-glorification of slaves.' (*The Will to Power*, 398, 758.)
155. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 131.