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**ADVERSARY CULTURES:
THE CASE OF “RELATIONAL AESTHETICS”
AND PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES**

Abstract. By applying Bourdieu’s theory of capital on the relational art and participatory practices, the following essay aims to explore the issue of autonomy of arts as introduced by Theodor Adorno while determining the social mechanism under which these practices operate. The purpose of this particular research represents an attempt to achieve an understanding of the relations of power under which relational art practices operate by applying Bourdieu’s theory of capital while at the same time examining the idea of “autonomy of arts” as it was introduced by Theodor Adorno in the late 90’s. As the research is conducted by an artist, it will inevitably be influenced by the empirical as well as the theoretical references applied to the artistic field. However, it is clear that from a disciplinary angle, relational art is directly engaging with society hence it does not only imply terms related to aesthetics, history and theory of arts. The research borrows notions from human sciences such as political philosophy, sociology and anthropology. It is also important to note that one of the main objectives of this research represents a nuanced and sincere clarification of the position from which relational art operates as well as an analytical exercise of the practices as well as its mechanism of infiltration and interaction in the world. Given the neo liberal capitalist structure, can arts gain at least relative autonomy? As I find myself working in the field of socially engaged art, I find it very important as a practitioner to be able to step outside my own field and acquire the role of the observer while analysing as objectively as possible my own position. The research applies the qualitative method as it examines a particular case study while it imports concepts from different fields. The first part of the article indicates the potential of the relational arts in acquiring a relative autonomy, while the second part contests its intentions and set of positions in realising its promise by

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applying Bourdieu's theory of capital. The scope of the research is far from comprehensive as several theories that intersect with the field, as well as projects, are not being analysed while a lot of Bourdieu's writings are left outside. Still, the essay recognises the influence of authors like Claire Bishop, Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord, Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, Terry Smith, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard as well as other historians and art theoreticians.

Keywords: hegemony, autonomy of arts, adversary cultures, relational aesthetics, cultural capital

Deeply anchored in the sociological transformations of the 19th century, where the imaginative thought conquers the rational, Bourdieu's theory of capital attempts to transcend the economic sphere by developing forms of capital that embrace the symbolic as well as the cultural sphere. Bourdieu's theory is extending the concept of capital to culture by demasking the relations of class power as well as social inequalities that are legitimated through academic credentials as institutions tend to "impose a dominant culture arbitrary defined by the dominant class (*the a priori of reproduction*)" (Desan 2014, 318). Cultural capital is conceived as a mediating factor in the reproduction of the class structure. The author relates this predisposition to the fundamental structure of the social life, defined as *habitus*, differently described as the subjective expectations of the objective probabilities of the social world.

"The *vis insita* representing the force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, while *lex insita* reflecting the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. One's endowment of capital determines one's *habitus*, which internalizes both the objective limits of one's conditions of existence, defined in terms of available capital, and also the relative structure of the social space, organized along the dominant / dominated axis." (Bourdieu 2002, 280)

The author indicates right away that social order represents an opposition between the dominant and the dominated, engraved in the division of labour and the distribution of resource and power, capable of creating symbolic or economic profit that in his view represents that roots of all the other types of capital. Bourdieu defines the substance of capital as

“accumulated labour in its materialised form or incorporated, embodied form, which, when appropriated on a private, *i.e.*, exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate energy in the form of reified living labour. Bourdieu demonstrates how the apparently ‘disinterested’ fields of practice mask power dynamics and hidden logic of power within cultural fields” (Desan 2014, 334) and interests that go beyond the economic sphere. Bourdieu invokes and seems to be aware of the fetishized conception of capital embodied in the social structure; nevertheless the use of the word “capital” which describes an economic reality neither reveals a critical position or present a resistance. Bourdieu just expands the notion as “a condition of its own existence, an understanding of the production and reproduction of class relations” (Desan 2022, 203). He defines capital as usable resources and power (capable of generating profit). Bourdieu also suggests that all forms of capital are accumulated in time while their distribution represents “the immanent structure of the social world” in a particular moment of the human history. The genealogy of that particular type of cultural capital is the result of the historical necessities applied to that particular period of time. In the *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Daniel Bell analyses the phenomena of modernity that develops adversary cultures. Daniel Bell suggests that any form of dominant culture develops “an adversary culture” as modernity itself engages a reorientation towards the ephemera, the fugitive, the transitory and the contingent, which are all expressions of the modern sensibility.

“All forms of capital are accumulated in time, not instantly, but whenever it comes about the distribution of a different forms of capital at a certain moment of time, every single form of capital represents the immanent structure of the social world, *i.e.* the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices.” (Bourdieu 1986, 46)

Similarly, Marx’s theory of modern society is based on the division of two social classes, the first being the proletariat (those who sell their work and time, being alienated from their own product) and the ruling

class who owns the capital controlling the material resources necessary for production. Comparatively, Max Weber talks about two subclasses of owners, one of possession and one of production or acquisition composed by entrepreneurs who acquire their property. For Weber, the problem of inequality of access to resources becomes the underline structure of the social condition. One of the most important predictions of Marx's theory proved to be the idea under which time becomes a value of exchange. In similar terms with Bourdieu's perspective, capital represents in Marx's view a quantity of goods (reified capital) as well as social relations and forms of symbolic power used to produce profit through its reproduction (selling). Production is closely related to the concept of labour as capitalism in Marx's theory represents a system of production, whose direct consequence represents the alienation of the worker from his work product. Marx suggests that this phenomenon characterises the social relations as well, as alienation penetrates into human relations that are being built by the same model. In other terms, Marx considers that alienation intrudes into social life firstly through the estrangement of the worker from his labour product, the other workers as well as through the alienation of the worker from his own being (*Gattungswesen*) as they are forced to sell their skills and labour becoming themselves products (goods for sale). The activity is dictated by the upper class (bourgeoise) who owns the means of production and power. The concept of alienated labour gained importance after World War II as the immaterial work of services makes its presence into the social landscape. Intellectuals and artists are considered to be cognitive and affective workers, since they produce and sell knowledge. They are compared to the creative specialists of the advertising industry whose task is to influence affectively the public and generate behavioural patterns. Equally, the works of art represent a modality of investing knowledge and affections in certain material, visual, textual, sound configurations in order to produce forms of knowledge as well as ways of experimentation with the affective world. Hence, the work of art becomes part of an economic capitalist system that dominates the forms of expression, artistic language and vocabulary able to transform communication into productive operations. Thereupon, the instrumentalization of the artistic production deprives art from its autonomy of aesthetic experience and becomes part of a utilitarian sphere of profit and economy.

The appearance of the Critical Social Theories, hence, whenever discussing the interpretation of the work of art comes up both in approaching the establishment of forms of resistance in opposition to the dominant culture, but also in approaching the term of *cultural hegemony* and the transformation of the artistic production into commodity. In this particular context it is also important to introduce the concept of the *commodity fetishism* through which we understand the transformation of social relations into a system of exchange of commodities and goods.

"As a form of reification, commodity fetishism transforms the intersubjective, abstract aspects of economic value into things that people believe have intrinsic value." (Marx 1887)

The products become commodities as they are endowed with qualities that symbolize the exchange value and remnants of social interaction. Nowadays, the works of art are considered to be part of the commodity fetishism system through their uniqueness value as well as through the exploitation of the cultural value of the artistic production. The work of art represents the expression of the artist's skills and other qualities which emerge not simply as modes of human communication. As a result, the work of art cannot escape the utilitarian capitalist system of exchange of commodities as well as the alienation.

The first artistic expressions of the critique of the capitalist system mirror social classes confronting the alienation of the product from the individual are deeply mirrored by the modern art and the impressionist movement. This can be seen in *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882), by Édouard Manet, where the painter, through the spatial construction and the inconsistencies in the perspectival compositions of the image, is unmasking the deconstruction of human relations in the Paris of the 19th century. Less impressionist, more realistic, we find Gustave's Courbet *The Stone Breakers* (1849). On the other hand, the most blatant example of the artistic production transformed into commodity represents the Socialist Realism developed in the Soviet Union that served as an instrument of manipulation and indoctrination of socialist parties.

The 20th century introduced the public to a new movement called Dada, as part of the European avant-garde. The Dada movement rejected the logic, reason, and aestheticism of modern capitalist society, by expressing instead nonsense, irrationality, and anti-bourgeois protest in their works. Around 1914, Duchamp is making a conscious decision by introducing the ready-made. The symbolic gesture can be interpreted as an intention to liberate the artist from the manual work redirecting the artistic production to the concept, the immaterial work. The artist was choosing mass-produced, commercially available, often utilitarian objects, presenting them as art objects.

Around 1990s, an introduction to performative practices takes place with examples such as Martin Creed, *Work No. 850* (2008), Elmgreen & Dragset, *Try* (1997), Santiago Sierra, *250 cm Lined Tattooed on 6 Paid People* (1999), Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds* (2010). The new movement raises ethical questions regarding the exploitation of work.

A series of artistic practices derived from conceptual art, performing traditional arts as well as modern installations are rooted in the desire to “overturn the traditional relationship between the art object, the artist and the audience are making their appearance” (Bishop 2012, 2). They are being sensitive towards identity politics by questioning the idea of identity, repression, inequality and injustice while equally concentrating on the marginalised groups. At the same time, the viewer acquires an active role and an increasing importance as he / she participates both in the production and interpretation of the work of art, while the idea of authorship is being contested. The work of art no longer represents a finite product, separated from its public, but it represents the occasion for collaborative creation as it embeds the pretext for common experience and thinking as an expression of an open system of social, political, cognitive, perceptual and affective relations.

Being rooted in the avant-gardist movement, the collaborative turn represents one of the most important transgressions in the history of contemporary socially and politically engaged arts. Claire Bishop also refers to the phenomena as the “social turn synonymous with political upheaval and movements for social change” (Bishop 2012, 3).

Thus, participatory arts will encompass a series of diverse and heterogeneous artistic practices such as: ephemeral sculptures, monuments,

socially engaged projects as well as politic activism. Furthermore, it embeds artistic and architectural interventions in the public space as well as land art and site-specific art. As a whole, we can observe an orientation towards participation, collaboration as well as an aspiration for building temporary communities, these being the most specific features of that particular practices. The movement is situating itself critically to the established public space and is contributing to its redefinition. The interventions are addressing to collective groups rather than the individual spectator, challenging the communicational spectre as well as the idea under which the work of art represent an aesthetic object. Clearly, this particular type of practices favours the creation and establishment of social relation through art.

"To put it simply: the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of situations; the work of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term project with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience, previously conceived as a 'viewer' or 'beholder', is now repositioned as a co-producer or participant." (Bishop 2012, 2)

Among these participative practices we can mention the *happenings* of Allan Kaprow or the performances of the Fluxus movement. Equally important are considered the social sculptures of Joseph Beuys, the politically charged actions of Graciela Carnevale or the Tucumán Arde group.

Nevertheless, manifestations with a truly participatory character are being noticed after 1980. The participative character distinguish itself from the collaborative one, since it introduces a new type of relation between the producer (considered to be the artist) and the receiver (considered to be the spectator) as the "spectator" is gaining an active and energetic role in the production of the work of art. The practices are being theorised as "dialogical art" (Grand Kester), "relational aesthetics" (Nicolas Bourriaud), "connective aesthetic" (Suzi Gablik), "relational aesthetics" (Claire Doherty). Claire Bishop, in her book, *Artificial Hells-Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, is referring also to those practices as "socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental

communities, dialogic art, littoral art, interventionist art, participatory art, collaborative art, contextual art and (most recently) social practice” (Bishop 2012, 5). Here is an interesting remark:

“Alfredo Jaar hands out disposable cameras to the residents of Catia, Caracas, whose images are shown as the first exhibition in a local museum (*Camera Lucida*, 1996); Lucy Orta leads workshops in Johannesburg to teach unemployed people new fashion skills and discuss collective solidarity (*Nexus Architecture*, 1997); Superflex start an internet TV station for elderly residents of a Liverpool housing project (*Tenantspin*, 1999); Jeanne van Heeswijk turns a condemned shopping mall into a cultural centre for the residents of Vlaardingen, Rotterdam (*De Strip*, 2001-2004); the Long March Foundation produces a census of popular papercutting in remote Chinese provinces (*Papercutting Project*, 2002); Annika Eriksson invites groups and individuals to communicate their ideas and skills at the Frieze Art Fair (*Do you want an audience?*, 2004); Temporary Services creates an improvised sculpture environment and neighbourhood community in an empty lot in Echo Park, Los Angeles (*Construction Site*, 2005); Vik Muniz sets up an art school for children from the Rio favelas (*Centro Espacial Vik Muniz*, Rio de Janeiro, 2006).” (Bishop 2012, 5)

The new theory of arts, known as relational aesthetics, introduced by Nicolas Bourriard comes as a result of the changes that occurred during the early 90’s when society was heading towards an advanced capitalist system marked by Guy Debord’s well known concept, the “society of spectacle”. Guy Debord, who is also known as the founder of the Situationist movement, affirms that the authentic social life has been replaced with its representation. The spectacle represents the inverted image of society in which relations between commodities have supplanted relations between people, in which “passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity” (Debord 1967, thesis 4). Moreover,

“The spectacle is not a collection of images, rather, it is a social relation among people, mediated by images.” (Snir 2015, 27)

Human alienation represents the result of the circulation of commodities and images. A process of absorption of the world perceived and lived with an image, a representation, a system of virtual representation and visual communication. Similarly, human relations are found under the same transformation in which they become a single image.

"Given the market's near total saturation of our image repertoire, so the argument goes, artistic practice can no longer revolve around the construction of objects to be consumed by a passive bystander. Instead, there must be an art of action, interfacing with reality, taking steps – however small – to repair the social bond."
(Bishop 2012, 11)

Thereupon, the goal of the artists supporting relational aesthetics artists is to build the form, "space" in which relationships between people are being returned to their natural free and unconstrained while escaping the "market society" as part of the affected social condition determined by the "society of spectacle". Relational Art aims to create in that sense a field in which new types of experimentation and interaction between people are possible. It creates new forms of aesthetic approach as well as communication. Its intention is anchored in the willing of "producing relational spatial-temporalities, interhuman experiences that are trying too free themselves from the ideological constraints of mass communication" (Nae 2015, 87), "relational art produces places where alternative socialites are being born as well as critical models and moments of constructed conviviality" (87). Nicolas Bourriaud argues that the criterion of success of a work of art represents its social transparency as the work of art constitutes the opportunity for discussions, criticism, interpretation. The work of art no longer represents a mediator of meaning, as the work of art is openly exposing the production process, its relation to the system of reproduction as well as its relation to the viewer and the artist's character in this particular system. The gestures and the interactions between the people that form the work of art represent at the same time its subject. The purpose of the relational art, in this sense, represents the resistance towards its transformation into a simple spectacle, in a commodity or

good for “sale while at the same time it opens itself up to new forms of heterogeneous alternative socialites” (Nae 2015, 88). In fact,

“Gregory Sholette and art historian Blake Stimson have argued that ‘in a world all but totally subjugated by the commodity form and the spectacle it generates, the only remaining theatre of action is direct engagement with the forces of production’.” (Bishop 2021, 11)

However, it is important to keep in mind that even though such practices operate in the commercial world, they do not have a commercial profile at the end of the day. They occupy an important presence in public commissions, biennials as well as in politically themed exhibitions. By nature, these kinds of projects cannot be transformed or manipulated by the art market, although artists can be commissioned and they can be present in a variety of social events, publications, workshops and performances. Claire Bishop is offering a remarkable example of the historical period of *New Labour* (1997-2010) that was developed under the philosophy of British Labour Party that were following a rhetoric equivalent to that of socially engaged artists in order to defend the public funding and spending on the arts.

“The production and reception of the arts was therefore reshaped within a political logic in which audience figures and marketing statistics became essential to securing public funding.” (Bishop 2012, 13)

By their project, the Party was advocating the elimination of social exclusion through arts and therefore New Labour heartened the arts to be more inclusive. We can see clear here how the apparently autonomous fields of arts and politics actually are interconnected exactly as Bourdieu suggest in his theory. Another example mentioned by the author represents that of *Our Creative Capacity (Ons Creatieve Vermogen)*, a public policy document that was presented to the right-wing coalition government by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Economic Affairs through which the institutions were trying to present the benefits of culture and creative industry. Automatically, the institutions were trying to promote the idea of conversion of the cultural product and arts into economic profit. In 2006, the Dutch government directed

15 million euros to “Culture and Economy” programme. The most benefitted being the museums as well as the creative industries.

“The model of New Labour built upon the Conservative government’s openly instrumental approach to cultural policy: a 2001 Green Paper opens with the words ‘Everyone is creative’, presenting the government’s mission as one that aims to free the creative potential of individuals.” (Bishop 2012, 15)

According to Angela McRobbie, it was the expressing of “a future generation of socially diverse creative workers who are brimming with ideas and whose skills need not only be channelled into the fields of art and culture but will also be good for business” (Bishop 2021, 15).

Claire Bishop claims that here we can detect a confusion between the terms of *art and creativity* that leads to another confusion regarding the relation between instrumentalization and accessibility. Through the discourse of creativity, the elitist activity of art is democratised, although today this leads to business rather than to disinterested creation, as Beuys wanted.

“The dehierarchising rhetoric of artists whose projects seek to facilitate creativity ends up sounding identical to government cultural policy geared towards the twin mantras of social inclusion and creative cities.” (Bishop 2012, 16)

In other words, the author is turning her attention towards those artistic practices that are promoting “stronger sense of community in the building”, although their value judgments are indistinguishable from the government art policy. The policies of social inclusion underlie the arts funding agenda. As a result, these kinds of participatory practices tend to follow the economic and political “nomos” that Bourdieu has developed in his theory of cultural capital, while losing their autonomy and their “transgressive” nature.

Another important aspect constitutes the clash between passive and active forces. As Jacques Rancière observed, in participatory practices, most of the times the artist knows that the spectator “has to do something”: and here lies the switch from passivity to activity.

“This injunction to activate is pitched both as a counter to false consciousness and as a realisation of the essence of art and theatre as real life. Still, the binary of active and inactive is reductive and unproductive, because it serves only as an allegory of inequality.” (Bishop 2012, 37)

The philosopher continues to argue that this situation continues to perpetuate inequality as “high art that is found in galleries is produced for and on behalf of the ruling classes; by contrast, the people can only be emancipated by direct inclusion in the production of the work. Those who act are inferior to those who are able to look, contemplate ideas, and have critical distance on the world” (38). This ethical dilemma has been frequently discussed while referring to socially engaged practices that has as subjects marginalised and excluded categories of individuals. These kinds of practices as a result are perceived with suspicion as many consider that it is assumed that working class-activity is reduced to manual labour and that the marginalised can only “work” physically; instead the middle class have the time and ability to analyse and critically reflect.

“Rancière argues, in response to Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1979), that social participation is particularly suited to the task of social inclusion risks not only assuming that participants are already in a position of impotence, it even reinforces this arrangement.” (Bishop 2012, 38)

The paradox of the situation situation, as far as we can understand, constitutes the fact that while participatory practices are meant to unmask the power dynamics as well as social inequalities, it remains anchored in the political structure of the neo-liberalist capitalist society.

“Even though participatory artists invariably stand against neoliberal capitalism, the values they impute to their work are understood formally (in terms of opposing individualism and the commodity object), without recognising that so many other aspects of this art practice dovetail even more perfectly with neoliberalism’s recent

forms (networks, mobility, project work, affective labour)." (Bishop 2012, 277)

Martin Stewart suggests, at the same time, that relational art can be seen as a manifesto for a new type of political art that confronts the market economy and services specific to capitalist system of informational technologies "as well as a naïve imitation or anesthetization of the capitalist modes of exploitation" (Nae 2015, 19). He believes that relational art does not succeed to detach itself from the status of commodity and the capitalist system of exchange, as it remains enslaved to the ideal of communication that characterizes the current capitalist system of production.

Nicolas Bourriaud does not manage to create an autonomous artistic framework in which social relations will never be transformed into commodities – which would involve the Marxist scenario of fetishizing culture. At the same time, relational art is creating social inequalities by pretending that it is actually accessible by addressing to the large public. For instance, the executors of these practices refuse to admit that the interpretation of the relational arts is linked to a particular type of education, knowledge and experiences that are mostly shared between artists (*by habitus*). The large audiences do not possess the key of understanding as the movement is historically rooted in the philosophical thinking of modernity as well as in what we call critical social theories. Consequently, the relational art projects are addressed actually to the elitist sphere of contemporary arts, without transgressing any social differences which at the same time could be easily camouflaged. Besides, the art critic Hal Foster remarked that "the institution may overshadow the work that it otherwise highlights: it becomes the spectacle, it collects the cultural capital, and the director-curator becomes the star" (Bishop 2004, 53). In Claire Bishop's perspective, "relational art should rather exercise an antagonistic version of "relationality" that creates a context in which the various problems as well as political conflictual positions that define the social space "are not sublimated by the works of art under a facial utopia, but rather are incorporated into the work of art" (Nae 2015, 191). Bishop also asks, "if relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom,

and why?" (Bishop 2004, 65); "the relations set up by relational aesthetics are not intrinsically democratic, as Bourriaud suggests, since they rest too comfortably within an ideal of subjectivity as whole and of community as immanent togetherness" (67). The art historian and critic gives as an example the work of Santiago Sierra, *160 cm Line Tattooed on 4 People*, (El Gallo Arte Contemporáneo, Salamanca, Spain, December 2000) or *Sechs Menschen, die für das Sitzen in Pappkartons nicht bezahlt werden dürfen* (*Workers Who Cannot Be paid, Remunerated to Remain Inside Cardboard Boxes*, 2000) through which Sierra exposes the invisible part of the low remunerated work, in this case concerning the sex workers and immigrants that do not possess the right to work and that accepts the contractual terms designated by the artist. The artist is exploiting the so called "autonomy arts" in order to provoke and intensify tensions that in the social space would have remained silenced. The artist is exploiting as a result the visibility offered by the institutional art space in order to bring to light the relations of production that are being invisible in the social space as well as relations of social antagonism that are being perceived as ethical dilemmas into the exhibition space.

Last, it is important to mention the fact that recently, a series of academic programs on participatory arts has made their way up and are being established in the field. Participatory and collaborative practices seem to be attracting more and more young artists that probably are recognising its "potential" as Bourdieu would characterise the profit in his "general science" of the economy of practices.

Applying Bourdieu's theory of capital on relational practices we can conclude the following. Agents in the field of relational art accumulate a high value of symbolic capital because of their choice to adopt practices that are considered transgressive or marginal, practices that at first could not accumulate recognition but serve as evidence that their intention and evolution are based on pure motivation and not on pursuing economic profit or popularity. Consequently, their practical disavowal of an interest in fame or money functions as a way of increasing the total value of reputation and income they can accumulate from their practices. For Bourdieu, symbolic capital always functions as transubstantiated form of economic capital as reputation can always be converted to money.

Cultural capital in Bourdieu's view is accumulated in time so, those who appear not to seek money, if the conditions are right and if they wait long enough, they can convert the reputation they accumulated by being disinterested in money, into financial expressions.

The legitimacy of a specific form of art comes at the same time with institutionalisation as quite often museums are considered as capable to accumulate the recognition of the diverse forms of expression experimented and developed in time, something that equally happened to the relational practices. This phenomenon describing the evolution of a specific form of artistic expressions is what we also name as transition from "avant-garde" to "consecrated avant-garde". As some practices accumulate symbolic capital through their presence in art galleries and institutions, their symbolic capital is converted into economic profit. As a result, the same practices are recognising the value of the economic capital as they are equally involved in legitimating and perpetuating the hierarchical relationships and inequality. At this point I would like to recall Daniel Bell's theory of culture and counter-culture saying that from his point of view art can consider itself relatively autonomous only while finding itself in the ephemeral position of the unrecognised, non-legitim form of contra-culture.

Still Theodor Adorno would argue that art can only maintain its autonomy from the other types of culture by finding ways of differentiating itself from the condition of goods and commodities that serve the mass consumption. The philosopher continues to say that art must always find angles allowing it to be able to distance from society and to be easily subjected to critiques without risking to be absorbed by the economic sphere that instead should be challenging. Art should distance itself from the seductive character of the cultural industry that reduces everything to exchange values.

"Adorno continue to say that although a total detachment from its fetishized character of commodity, may be considered an illusion, art must remain a conscious illusion of its illusionist character to be able to criticise the illusion of the ubiquitous value of exchange."
(Nae 2015, 53)

As a result, as paradoxical it might appear, since relational art practices are found in the ambiguous situation where they are part of the capitalist society and yet they claim their own autonomous evolution, it should not surprise us that they are the only left with the role of unmasking relationships of power between consumers of different social positions.

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