Art and brands : who learns from whom? : Brands - competing with art

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Art and brands: who learns from whom?
Brands – competing with art

Since brands have played a decisive role in the world of consumption, people have not failed to recognize phenomena that have occurred in earlier centuries – with hindsight – that bear similarities with modern marketing.[1] The realm of art offers a particularly large number of comparative examples; after all, most artists were not only freelance entrepreneurs, but also particularly professional and ambitious in terms of self-portrayal. In order to attract attention and to attain a unique position in the market, they left practically nothing to chance – from individual stylistic elements to their signatures – and in this respect indeed created 'corporate design' prototypes. Otto Karl Werckmeister's 1981 publication on Paul Klee's economic career strategies[2] was followed by several similarly oriented analyses, of which Svetlana Alpers's 1988 study entitled *Rembrandt als Unternehmer* (Rembrandt's enterprise) probably attracted the most attention.[3] In his 1997 book entitled *Der Ausstellungskünstler* (The artist in the modern world), Oskar Bätschmann discussed the methods of self-commercialization employed by artists such as Géricault or Courbet;[4] other papers reveal how Cranach sought to secure monopolies[5] or that Rubens affiliated a second operation to his workshop in which market-oriented copperplate engravings of his paintings were produced and distributed.[6]

The language of marketing has now entered the literature of art research; for example, it is considered quite normal to refer to Raphael's signatures as 'designer labels'.[7] Modern art researchers consider the imitation to the point of forgery of successful artists by their greedy contemporaries as an early form of branding piracy; the identification of a group such as the 'Blauer Reiter' (The Blue Rider) or the 'Blaue Vier' (The Blue Four) with a colour appears to have been a measure taken as a result of high-profile image-building.[8]

If the art business of the past few centuries can thus be described as the preliminary phase of a label culture, this is a theme expressly examined by many contemporary artists, whose work reflects the enormous significance that brands have acquired since they no longer merely serve as orientation and to promote confidence, but above all lay claim to added intellectual value and a spiritual dimension. Since at

least the stronger brands have come to symbolize values such as freedom, coolness, tolerance, security or the desire to achieve, they possess validity far beyond the practical value of their products. The founders of the Jung von Matt advertising agency put it in a nutshell when they claimed that a brand such as Nike 'does not sell shoes, but dreams, perceptions, ideas'.[9] The advertisers talk of a 'shift from producing wares to producing images', thus confirming a hypothesis put forward most sharply and prominently by the Canadian anti-globalization activist Naomi Klein. In her book entitled *No Logo!* (2000) she explains how branding has become the 'actual product' of corporations since the 1980s;[10] on the other hand, in order to reduce costs to a minimum, the manufacture of the products distributed in the name of the brand is delegated to others. The author argues that corporations prefer to manufacture in countries with cheap labour forces, which, not enjoying the support of trade unions and workers' committees, are often mercilessly exploited.

However, Naomi Klein criticizes not only the outsourcing of production, but also fears spiritual pollution as a consequence of the increased expenditure for the image of brands: in order to 'fabricate a brand', besides 'a constant renewal of visual language for marketing [...] above all new spaces [...] are needed to disseminate the brand's self-image'. An accelerated brand culture thus means a 'partially disguised, partially open war against public and individual space'.[11] Klein counters by articulating a 'longing for metaphorical space: for release, for escape, for a sort of freedom with an open exit', and accuses aggressive marketing tactics of causing a 'loss of space' that takes place 'within the individual'. The strong brands 'colonize intellectual space'.[12]

Statements such as these also explain why artists in particular explore phenomena of branding culture. Art is defined far less by a practical value, but instead promises conceptual and spiritual qualities. Like a modern branded article, a work of art is said to exist above all in intellectual spaces and to have the power to change the recipient – or consumer. A gallery-owner does not sell pictures – and not only since the 1980s –, but dreams, perceptions, ideas. Artists are thus the genuine competitors of all brand designers. And the latter have of late disputed the almost monopolistic position of the former: the market for intellectual property has suddenly become a key factor and a bitterly contested terrain of consumer society.[13]

Culture jamming

At the same time, however, an artist's pride lies in his independence, which he proves by assuming a critical, distant attitude in his work or doing something unexpected. For this reason, artists do not do the same thing as advertising agencies or marketing managers in dealing with branding issues. Many even adopt a critical stance in the

style of Naomi Klein, and see it as their responsibility to transform occupied intellectual space into that longed-for metaphorical space. In the competition for intellectual goods they want to appear to be representing the 'better' values, or at least to do so more honestly and authentically. Some of them create their own labels and logos for the purpose, but even more absorb and alienate the 'corporate design' of established brands. This creates insecurities that impede the convenient consumption of a visual language, which is intended to challenge the viewer to reflect and should thus be perceived as criticism. However, anyone who takes the liberty of criticizing others also lays claim to moral superiority. Some artists even expressly launch counter-attacks on brands that they perceive as too strong; their greatest aim is to tarnish the image of such brands permanently. Revealing the drawbacks of the beautiful world of consumer goods and addressing all those issues that advertisers suppress or trivialize is the declared intention of many leftist, alternatively oriented art activists, who frequently join forces to form loose networks with civil rights activists, journalists or scientists.

Naomi Klein also belonged to a group of artists and civil rights activists whose declared aim is 'to parody advertising, to kidnap advertising posters, as it were, and to change their message drastically'.[14] This practice, known as 'culture jamming', has spread in all the industrial nations – which for two decades should perhaps have been more accurately described as marketing nations – and has become an important form of contemporary political art. The mouthpiece of the movement is *Adbusters* magazine, which has been published in Vancouver four times a year since 1989 and is distributed in approximately sixty states with a circulation of over 100,000 copies.[15] But apart from interfering with the 'corporate design' of a brand, 'cultural jammers' also employ more extreme tactics, such as calling for the boycott of certain labels or television programmes, giving parties on motorways under the motto 'reclaim the streets' in order to bring the traffic to a standstill, and proclaiming an annual 'buy nothing day'. (However, Kalle Lasn, the editor of *Adbusters*, also designs advertisements for organizations like Greenpeace, which goes to show that 'culture jammers' are not necessarily opposed to branding *per se*; instead, they use the instruments of marketing against established and entirely capitalist brands.)

'Culture jamming' owes several of its performance-related forms to the art of the 1960s, when the Fluxus movement rebelled against bourgeois high culture by wrecking grand pianos or occupying junk-yards. At the same time, performance artists discovered the street or their own bodies as places of provocation. In the wake of the student protests of 1968, many of the new forms of expression were absorbed by demonstration culture, where they have since developed in their own way, not with-

out in turn having some effect on art. Unfortunately, the close ties between art and political actionism in recent decades have not yet been thoroughly researched, but deserve a monographic analysis. Such an examination should include a chapter devoted to 'culture jamming', as its techniques are now some of the most important tools used by protesters.

For example, the international kein mensch ist illegal (no one is illegal) network formed at the 1997 documenta X also exploited the possibilities of 'culture jamming' in order to draw attention to its goal – a liberal asylum and migration policy. The network criticized airlines like the German Lufthansa who co-operate with the state by flying rejected asylum-seekers back to their countries of origin even against their will. In the eyes of the political activists, the airlines thus make themselves guilty of being accessories to the violation of human rights, as the deportees are frequently threatened with a trial or even the death sentence. In the year 2000 kein mensch ist illegal developed a flyer that advertised for a new class, the 'deportation class' in the Lufthansa style: one of the 'arguments' in favour of the new business model was that the more deported asylum-seekers were on board, the cheaper the journey would become for the other passengers. When the flyers were displayed in information boxes at airports or distributed at tourism trade fairs by persons whose uniforms were confusingly similar to those of Lufthansa flight attendants, they caused bewilderment: did Lufthansa not always represent values such as professionalism, security, friendliness? Did the company now intend to raise its profits by engaging in dubious dealings? In any case, the campaign targeted at Lufthansa's image was so successful that the airline felt the need to rectify the situation at press conferences, which of course created even more publicity for the political concerns of kein mensch ist illegal.

In 2001 the activists organized a demonstration in the internet: as many users as possible should go to the Lufthansa site in order to block the server and thus to render queries and ticket bookings impossible, or at least to cause considerable delays. Lufthansa's high service standards – once again a central element of its image – should thus be called into question. kein mensch ist illegal even provided special software featuring programs that copied themselves automatically so that a user could be 'present' on the Lufthansa site several times at once, which overloaded the server even more. The fact that this campaign was ultimately less successful than the organizers had hoped was probably due to the airline's astute defence policy: Lufthansa had reserved additional server capacity in advance.

Alf Lohmann, one of the main protagonists of the kein mensch ist illegal movement, explained in an interview that a brand-oriented company is an easy target for its opponents: 'Lufthansa certainly makes it easy for us; if it approaches us via images,

we can besmirch that image. That is an artistic approach.' It is thus not at all necessary to resort to violence and destroy or disrupt the company's infrastructure. 'You can exchange the military battlefield for the artistic one [...]. Because today Lufthansa is no longer a transport company, but the emblem of a transport company. [...] And as soon as we are on a level of emblems and symbols, we can also attack these companies on that level.'[16]

At a time when the value of a company depends to a considerable extent on its image and corporate management thus involves questions of aesthetics and presentation, thanks to their competence in design-related matters artists are ideally effective critics. Just as avant-garde artists once distanced themselves from the predominant aesthetic, which they considered kitsch or banal, art today can display critical potential against the aesthetics of advertising or corporate styling. By placing 'corporate design' in new contexts, alienating or exaggerating it, art is able to deconstruct meanings or even to generate alternative ones. Analysts of the *zeitgeist* such as Naomi Klein even expect future debates to be conducted primarily on the level of aesthetics and symbolism. Inspired by artistic methods, political activists could develop a partisan-like sensibility and potential in order to disrupt severely the strategies of branded corporations.

However, there is a risk of art and its various forms being overestimated, as most of its opponents are major labels that have invested huge sums in their image for years or decades. A few campaigns, however pointedly and intelligently they are executed, are scarcely sufficient to influence the collective memory and to besmirch a company's image permanently. Today, artists' marginal economic power – and hence their weak position when it comes to wrestling for the attention of the mass media – also leaves them a role that scarcely extends beyond causing a disturbance: to be able to create a style of their own, they would need to be far more present in public space and the everyday media.

Cultural hacking

Anyone who causes a disturbance or launches an attack must himself expect to become the object of tactical manœuvres. Indeed, many major labels have already reacted to 'culture-jamming' and immunized themselves to a large extent by playing the role of subversives. 'Advertising culture has demonstrated its remarkable ability to absorb criticism of their message, to appropriate it and even to profit from it', Naomi Klein observes with a certain degree of resignation.[17] In her book she documents examples of calculated 'anti-advertising', which ultimately mean that it is no longer possible to perceive anything as a protest. Instead, a brand acquires a humorously

jaunty, hip and cosmopolitan image when it crosses the boundaries of traditional advertising by exercising self-criticism of its products in its spots, for example. But some attempts to swallow every refractory element seem particularly brazen, such as when Nike asked the famous consumers' lawyer Ralph Nader to accuse the brand of employing shameless advertising techniques in a television ad in the United States.[18]

In any case, examples like these show that 'culture jamming' has not been ineffective – even if the effect is different to that intended. Like the hackers, whose intention was to break security codes and ultimately contributed to making computer systems more secure, artists and political activists rapidly become the voluntary or involuntary accomplices of the brand designers in corporations and agencies. This is why for some years now people have no longer used the term 'culture jamming', but use 'cultural hacking' or 'brand hacking' to describe the effects of artistic intervention on brand culture.[19] Many artists and groups of artists now even co-operate directly with companies, leaving the shelter of partisan politicizing and launching their campaigns with the financial support of the brands that they 'hack'.

Martin Strauss and Otto Mittmannsgruber, for example, have frequently used billboard posters, often working with existing material but involving the brands of various sectors, since the mid-1990s.[20] For the recipients, who or what lies behind such campaigns thus remains a mystery. Their aim is to test the resilience of the visual idioms employed by advertisers as well as those used by individual brands by fragmenting or expanding them by adding new elements. What happens when only one compartment of a poster is stuck to a billboard, the rest of which suddenly looks like a coarsely rendered wall? Or how is our perception changed when an arrow, the same size as the poster to which it points, is accompanied by a sentence such as 'Does this poster bother you?' Perhaps this exposes the clichéd and ideological presentation of a poster; but it is also conceivable that it is more conspicuous than other posters and hence fulfils its advertising purpose even more successfully. Deconstruction suddenly becomes a service, which is why it also seems plausible when at least some brands not only consent to a campaign by Strauss and Mittmannsgruber, but even pay for the advertising space. Such campaigns render their image a little more complex; they are considered more intelligent, more self-deprecating or bolder than before.

Daniel Pflumm's creations are a particularly analytical version of 'brand hacking'.[21] He removes all script elements from brand logos, thus reducing them to their graphic parts: colour(s) and form. He presents these vestiges of logos like illuminated advertisements and arranges them as wall installations. To the same extent that these structures are reminiscent of minimalist sculptures, the viewer has a sense of *déjà vu* when he sees them. However, the alienation is so successful that even brand *aficiona-*

dos will only recognize what the patterns remind them of in certain cases. The dependence of 'corporate design' on script and context thus becomes palpable, and Pflumm offers the opportunity to reflect on the symbiosis of image and word in a brand, or, generally, to study the importance of the logo for a brand's image.

Such issues are also the theme of works by Pflumm in other forms, although he does not collaborate directly with or for corporations. For example, he makes films by combining excerpts from television ads whose pictorial rhetoric is revealed merely through the fact that similar iconographies or stylistic patterns are seen in rapid succession. However, in order to isolate the typical design of product and brand presentation in even more concentrated form, Pflumm also switched to designing his own fictitious product with the name *NEU* (New). He makes such intensive use of the aesthetic tricks with which the innovative or fresh character of a product is supposed to be suggested – shades of blue and white, zones of overexposure, flashing reflections of light – that it is ultimately novelty 'per se', independent of the stylistic requirements of individual sectors, that becomes apparent. What initially may appear to be a parody of advertising is – in true artistic tradition – more an idealization, namely the reduction of a multitude of advertising messages to perfected basic patterns that could also serve as the model for new campaigns at any time. 'Brand hacking' is thus transformed into a typology of brand design.

The brand as *trompe-l'œil*

While Pflumm restricts himself to the visual idiom of brand presentation, other artists attempt to take into account as many areas of a brand as possible. However, it is not unusual for the pressure of self-marketing to take centre stage in their work, rather than the aesthetics of alien brands. Popular modernist role models such as 'martyr', 'magician' or 'clown' already encode the artist as a brand in any case, as they give him a genuine 'corporate design' (even more pronounced than in the past, for which the artists, as mentioned earlier, can already be described with the vocabulary of brand culture). In the wake of the label boom of recent decades, those who 'brand' and consciously perceive themselves as a brand can increase their chances of success in the art market.

However, artistic strategies thus also converge with the techniques of the cult of stardom as practised in the world of music, sports or television. Artists apparently do not occupy a special position in the general trend towards celebrity brands; instead, they often even take up elements that have already been tried and tested on girl groups and boy bands or stars such as Madonna, Britney Spears or David Beckham. Artist labels like Chicks on Speed[22] or Com & Com[23] are thus practically indistin-

guishable from the brands of other sectors: they are intended to realize the dream of fame by developing a 'corporate identity' that is as clearly defined and positive as possible.

The claim sometimes made that there is an ironic intention behind adopting the codes of other sectors is ostensible at best, and is due to calculated marketing tactics rather than an interest in deconstructing the patterns of success. Up-to-date artist labels thus transform conventional artistic media such as multiples into merchandising articles; traditional occasions like private views are turned into pop events. These 'brand artists' affirm the laws of the market and marketing without any critical distance; they attempt to be absorbed at the centre of society with their success.

A distinction must be drawn between 'brand artists' and those who, although they also develop their own names into brands, focus less on the market or attracting the maximum attention than on seeking an aestheticizing exploration of the stylistic characteristics of brand culture. Res Ingold, for example, has been working on the 'corporate design' of an airline, Ingold Airlines, since 1982.[24] Long before Naomi Klein's diagnoses, Ingold drew a logical conclusion from the fact that corporations now frequently (have to) devote more attention to image management than to production: while the overall profile of Ingold Airlines is indistinguishable from that of other brands and has become a complex aesthetic phenomenon, specific products or services fade entirely into the background; it is also no longer important whether we can really book flights with the airline or whether we are dealing with 'a forgery without an original'.[25] If the protagonists of kein mensch ist illegal already perceived Lufthansa as a mere 'emblem of a transport company', Ingold Airlines represents the perfection of this emblematic character. Ingold thus joins an – artistic – illusionist tradition, and just as a mural in a baroque church suggests spaces that, on closer inspection, do not exist, the brand he has developed also turns out to be a superficial phenomenon – in *trompe-l'œil*.

Ingold Airlines attracts attention with advertising slogans and give-aways, and has its own stand at tourism trade fairs; since 1996, when the organization was turned into a public limited company, it has also presented itself to the public with annual general meetings and annual reports. The website provides data on corporate history as well as information on various products and services ('maxmiles club', 'liftax', 'animal escorting', etc.); the visitor can also order a newsletter. Ingold Airlines even sponsors the arts, and has already been the 'Official Carrier' of Art Frankfurt.

Not even the tone of Ingold Airlines' publications is conspicuously different from that of other companies: it praises its own performance in glibly optimistic phrases, although Ingold Airlines expresses some aspects slightly more openly than usual. For

example, emphasis is laid on the importance of 'designed atmospheres' for the brand's image, drawing attention to the acoustic and olfactory dimensions of 'corporate design', which although long since taken into account by the major brands, are barely mentioned by name in the debates surrounding brand culture – or even by 'culture jammers'. According to Ingold Airlines, the 'sound of the first contact', for example on an information line, but also the 'sound of the engines' has an influence on the image, is even an 'acoustic quality that can be systematically formed'.[26]

Announcements of this kind make us aware of just how ambitious branding has become with regard to the complexity of design. 'Corporate design' that encompasses all the senses is even reminiscent of erstwhile dreams of the synthesis of the arts (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), which at the same provides a (further) explanation as to why artists in particular are exploring the phenomena of label culture. Indeed, Naomi Klein's concern that brands occupy practically all the space available again appears fully justified; brands are an all-encompassing event, organized with the purpose of idolizing clients or of luring them away from competitors. For example, not only Ingold Airlines talks about the importance of 'fragrances',[27] but car manufacturers also occupy hosts of chemists to design the smells inside their vehicles in such a way that clients fall in love with their cars and decide soon after buying them to acquire a model of the same brand the next time.

Ingold thus does not exaggerate the real situation at all; nor does he test new marketing strategies, but merely reflects what is happening in the world of brands in any case. His project thus resembles a ready-made; appropriately, many elements of the company's 'corporate design' do not originate from him, but were developed by an advertising and communications agency, Schlicht + Nilshon, which treats Ingold Airlines like any other client.[28] Thus an aesthetic that was developed outside the art world has been transferred to the realm of art and exposed to the conditions of perception that apply there; the styling of the business world can be observed independently of those places in which it would usually appear. Once his attention has been attracted by the aesthetics of the texts and images, it is up to the recipient to decide whether he should adopt a critical or an appreciative stance; in other words, whether he is appalled by the great efforts to which the marketing people will go, or whether he perceives that effort as a great cultural achievement.

Explanatory commentaries by the Schlicht + Nilshon agency, such as those published after Ingold Airlines relaunched its logo in 2000, also contribute to a reflection on the design of the brand. Since the relaunch, the logo has been based on the oval shapes of aircraft windows and is expressly not intended to 'illustrate speed or employ clumsy aeronautical metaphors'.[29] That would force the company to offer only

services typical of airlines, which could soon be disastrous in times of dynamic markets. In other words, Ingold Airlines wants to keep its options open. This idea is also supposed to be expressed in the colour system of the 'corporate design': rather than occupying only one colour, the company prefers to work with a 'colour combination' consisting of black, white and red to emphasize the 'company's great flexibility'.[30]

The emancipation from a fixed job profile echoes the conviction that a brand, in any case, performs more functions than in the past because it has to represent values and ideals – preferably its own 'philosophy'. Just as Nike sells 'dreams, perceptions, ideas' rather than (only) casual footwear, Ingold Airlines also claims to be 'not merely an airline', but 'an attitude, an inner conviction'.[31] Further details are given of the airline's corporate values as 'openness, tolerance, freedom, serenity'.[32] Thus one can have a good opinion of the company even if one will never have the opportunity to fly Ingold Airlines, which can be identified as a fully-fledged company inasmuch as it offers what is apparently the most important thing in today's brand culture: lifestyle and community.

Meaningfulness without meaning – parallels between art and brand culture

Such avowals, typical of brand culture, are ingenious, as they avoid excluding anyone. Regardless of how ideologically charged a brand may be, its designers are masters of the art of the non-committal: they describe a brand as open, but do not say for what; they talk of freedom, but remain vague about how they wish to use it. They praise tolerance, but do not reveal what they are prepared to pay for it. Similarly to the slogans at party conventions, many slogans are merely 'empty codes' that signalize meaning but are meaningless.[33] Instead of restricting themselves to a clearly defined target group, most companies – including Ingold Airlines – try first and foremost to lend their image an interesting atmosphere that arouses the curiosity of potential clients, appeals to their aspirations and is temptingly promising. But a successful brand image does not provide a clear picture; in its vagueness it offers a 'projection screen'. This promises to be the most successful approach, as the image arouses positive feelings and alienates nobody.

However, this strategy of modern image-building was not discovered by a market economy in the process of globalization, but is equally prevalent – and has been for much longer – in the art world. (Precisely this makes it easier to understand the competition between art and brands described earlier, as well as the affinity of artists like Res Ingold to the aesthetics of modern marketing!) Thus since the emergence in the late eighteenth century of a theoretical basis for and legitimization of artistic independence, formulations such as the famous Kantian phrase 'purposefulness without a

purpose'[34] have been cited to characterize the special nature of art. To reject the idea that a work of art had to fulfil a specific purpose – such as to eulogize a ruling house or to glorify Catholic moral doctrine – and to prevent it from being perceived as useless and a mere luxury, one resorted to attributing art with the qualities of a joker: in its complexity, a work of art was said to have the capacity to give every recipient what he most urgently needed. The same work, then, could stimulate one person, moderate another, differentiate a viewer intellectually, and bring another down to earth. In this respect, a work of art may lack a predefined purpose, but is highly purposeful.

The entire concept of art as a religion, which came to predominate no later than during the Romantic period, is based on the idea of art as an undefined – infinite – and, due to its ambiguity, inexhaustible dimension.[35] To describe this special quality, one frequently resorted to oxymorons and paradox climaxes, which in turn transcended unambiguous specification and did not exclude any projection – and are particularly fascinating, being a unity of contrasts. Ludwig Tieck, for example, says that a work of art possesses both 'calm and vitality, plenitude and void';[36] Schiller also noted that art was in a 'state of the greatest calm and the greatest movement', for which 'language has no name'.[37]

However, advertising agencies and brand managers have also developed a fondness for employing the same technique since the boom in brand culture. In his novel *Der letzte Schrei* (The Savage Girl), which is set in the milieu of trend research, Alex Shakar describes this marketing strategy in detail, and has even coined a term for it: he calls the accumulation of contrasting qualities 'paradessence' – a paradox essence – and writes about coffee thus: 'The paradessence of coffee is stimulation and relaxation. Every successful advertising campaign for coffee will [...] promise these two mutually exclusive states at the same time.'[38] Shakar mentions adventure and repose as the paradessence of tourism; sticking to the ground and the possibility of taking a flying leap are the paradessence of casual footwear. The image-styling of stars also frequently obeys the principle of combining contradictory qualities; this is true of David Beckham, for example, who is both the cool, robust athlete and the sensitive *pater-familias*.

Artists who present themselves as brands, or create new ones, are thus simply retrieving for art strategies that were probably first developed there. Conversely, nothing could teach brand designers how to design and present something both as auratic and as non-committal as possible better than the art world. How many works are there in modern art that, due to the physically expressive way in which they are painted, appear to be dramatic and existential, but do not provide any guidance as to what the recipient should regard as dramatic and existential? Or thanks to their

vague or cryptic titles appear to be mysterious and profound, but do not determine where their spiritual emphasis lies? These are all paraphrases of 'purposefulness without a purpose', which express the claim that the work of art should offer each recipient what he is looking for.

However, works of art or branded articles that follow this logic are scarcely trailblazers; rather than distinguishing themselves from others, their image is similar to all the others that are aimed at creating an aura. The values of Ingold Airlines are to be found in the mission statements of hundreds of other companies, formulated identically or at least in a very similar way. Meaningfulness without meaning, then, is the updated translation of the Kantian formula into the world of branding: the many somehow magically emotional brands are as interchangeable as the various types of abstract painting or other works that look like art because they are absorbed by it, reproducing contrary characteristics simultaneously.

If, for many, art has the edge over current brands in terms of credibility, it is probably because it has already functioned as a source of salvation for many generations longer; people turn to art who believe that happiness can only be found by overcoming mortality, in the realm of non-committal promises. Be it a work of art, a journey to far-off lands or a mobile phone: nowadays, everyone makes more or less the same promises. Art's greatest success in the modern age is to have developed the model of a product-related aesthetic and a 'corporate design' that guarantees the survival of a capitalist market economy, even if all our basic needs – specific desires – have long since been satisfied and we prefer to consume attitudes and feelings rather than practical values.

1   See the article by Walter Grasskamp in this book.

2   See Otto Karl Werckmeister, 'Klee im Ersten Weltkrieg' (1979), in Otto Karl Werckmeister, *Versuche über Paul Klee*, Frankfurt am Main, 1981, pp. 9–97.

3   See Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt als Unternehmer. Sein Atelier und der Markt* (1988), Cologne, 1989.

4   See Oskar Bätschmann, *Der Ausstellungskünstler. Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem*, Cologne, 1997.

5   See Monika and Dietrich Lücke, 'Lucas Cranach in Wittenberg', in Claus Grimm, Johannes Erichsen and Evamaria Brockhoff,

eds., *Lucas Cranach. Ein Maler-Unternehmer aus Franken*, Coburg, 1994, pp. 59–65.

6   See Ingeborg Pohlen, *Untersuchungen zur Reproduktionsgraphik der Rubenswerkstatt*, Munich, 1985.

7   See Rona Goffen, 'Raphael's Designer Labels: From the Virgin Mary to 'La Fornarina'', *artibus et historiae*, no. 48, 2003, pp. 123–42.

8   See Walter Grasskamp, 'Blauer Reiter und lila Kuh. Werbung ist keine Kunst', in Walter Grasskamp, *Konsumglück. Die Ware Erlösung*, Munich, 2000, pp. 114–31.

9   Holger Jung and Jean-Remy von Matt, *Momentum. Die Kraft, die Werbung heute braucht*, Berlin, 2002, p. 184.

10 Naomi Klein, *No Logo!* (2000), Pößneck, 2001, p. 41.
11 Ibid., p. 27.
12 Ibid., pp. 81ff.
13 See Wolfgang Ullrich, *Mit dem Rücken zur Kunst. Die neuen Statussymbole der Macht*, Berlin, 2000, pp. 84–119.
14 Klein 2001 (see note 10), p. 290.
15 See <http://www.adbusters.org>.
16 'Das Ziel ist der Server', interview by Jochen Becker with artists of the kein mensch ist illegal group, *die tageszeitung*, no. 6471, 15.6.2001, p. 13 <http://www.taz.de/pt/2001/06/15/a0192. nf/text>.
17 Klein 2001 (see note 10), p. 302.
18 See ibid., p. 313.
19 See the article by Franz Liebl in this book, and Franz Liebl, 'The Art and Business of Cultural Hacking: eine Bestandsaufnahme', in Thomas Düllo and Franz Liebl, eds., *Cultural Hacking. Kunst des Strategischen Handelns*, Vienna, 2005, pp. 181–228.
20 See Otto Mittmannsgruber and Martin Strauss, *Kampagnen ohne Auftrag. Kunstprojekte in Massenmedien*, Frankfurt am Main, 2004. See also http://www.kunstundmedien.org.
21 See <http://www.danielpflumm.com>.
22 See <http://www.chicksonspeed.com>.
23 See <http://www.com-com.ch>.
24 See <http://www.ingoldairlines.com>.
25 Stefan Römer, *Der Begriff des Fake*, Berlin, 1998, p. 182 <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/dissertationen/roemer-stefan-1998-07-09/HTML/>.
26 *ingold airlines – more than miles*, exh. cat., Zeppelin Museum, Friedrichshafen, 2000–1, p. 109.
27 Ibid.
28 See <http://www.schlichtnilshon.de/seite_10_ingold/seite_ingold_1.html>.
29 *Ingold airlines* 2000 (see note 26), p. 116.
30 Ibid., p. 118.
31 Ibid., p. 115.
32 Ibid., p. 120.
33 Peter Weibel, 'Logokultur und Jugendindustrie', in Klaus Neumann-Braun and Birgit Richard, eds., *Coolhunters. Jugendkulturen zwischen Medien und Markt*, Frankfurt am Main, 2005, pp. 57–64, quoted from p. 63.
34 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790).
35 See Wolfgang Ullrich, 'Vorsicht mit Blanko-schecks: Wie die Autonomie der Kunst zum Verhängnis wurde', *Neue Rundschau*, 116/1, 2005, pp. 9–29.
36 Ludwig Tieck, *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798), Stuttgart, 1994, p. 283.
37 Friedrich Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (1795), NA 20, ed. Benno von Wiese, Weimar, 1962, p. 360 (15th letter).
38 Alex Shakar, *Der letzte Schrei*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 2002, p. 92.

Summary

The essay presents various ways in which artists deal with the phenomenon of modern brand culture. The following points are discussed: (1) politically oriented works and campaigns that launch attacks on the image of large corporations using artistic instruments in the sense of Naomi Klein's criticism of the hype surrounding brands; (2) artistic positions that analyse the function or iconography of logos and 'corporate design', and, by 'hacking' or deconstructing a brand, provide impulses for more considered and more complex branding processes; (3) the creation of new brands in the realm of art; either artists label themselves or a brand is presented as a purely aesthetic phenomenon, as a new version of the 'universal art work'. The reason for the interest of many contemporary artists in issues relating to brand culture is believed to be the conceptually and spiritually charged character of brand images. Offering more than practical value was long monopolized by art; that monopoly has only been seriously threatened in the past two decades. The essay is also intended to demonstrate how art and brand culture have become similar in their strategies of presenting aura and embodying (non-committal) values. Art thus appears as the archetype and role model of today's brand culture.