

The art of appropriation in three 'takes'

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KORNELIA IMESCH

The art of appropriation in three ‘takes’

‘Opening credits’

It is a well-known fact that the continuing commercialization of western society since 1945, which in the context of the new mass media and trivial culture also called into question the traditional concept of art with its perception of originality and authenticity,¹ has had far-reaching consequences for the structures of the art system and the way artists perceive themselves.² Through postmodernist Appropriation Art, artists have become recipients and interpreters of the world of the media, consumption and brands.³ Cindy Sherman, for example, repeatedly indicated that television, film and the fascination for these media have had a considerable influence on her.⁴ And Richard Prince even pronounced that the images and content conveyed by the media and commerce should be more truthful and convincing.⁵

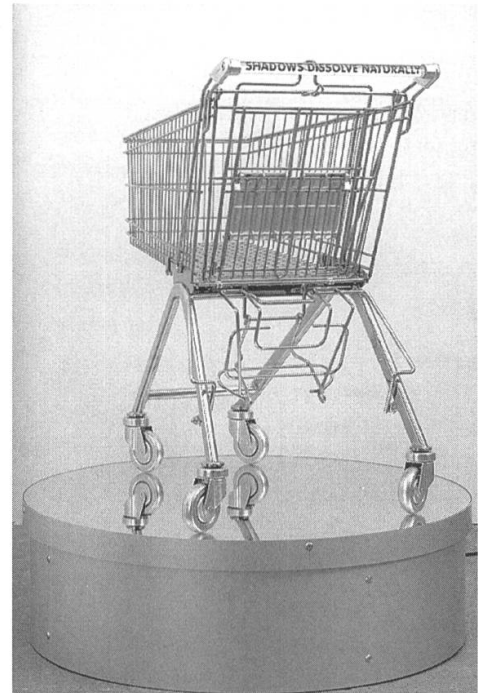
Moreover, the exponents of Pop Art, whose work was oriented towards the themes and objects found in department stores and the entertainment industry, introduced greater sensibility for artistic image-building in the 1960s. The phenomena of ‘star artists’ and ‘shooting stars’ emerged⁶ – artists who establish themselves in the art system by making branding themes and strategies the content and hallmark of their art. Richard Prince, mentioned above, only rose to international prominence with his series of photographs of cowboys for the successful Marlboro advertising campaign, which revived an archaic, charismatically inflated cult of homoerotic masculinity in the 1980s.⁷ Terry Richardson also makes associative reference to this cult as well as to the cigarette brand’s slogan in his pornographic self-reflection entitled *Terryworld*. By contrast, the works of Daniele Buetti and Santiago Sierra explore the concept of branding in the original sense of the word, as well as in a political and socio-critical sense. They show us men and women as (literally) ‘branded’ by products and brands; either as models of a European world of luxury or members of a so-called Third World, their hair dyed blond using Schwarzkopf products, who are willing to sell their bodies and minds, or are forced to do so for economic reasons.⁸

Other artists make the domain of brand consumption and the media the theme of their work by explicitly investigating the gender-specifically determined lifestyle di-



1 Sylvie Fleury, *Spectacular (Shopping Bags)*, 1990, detail

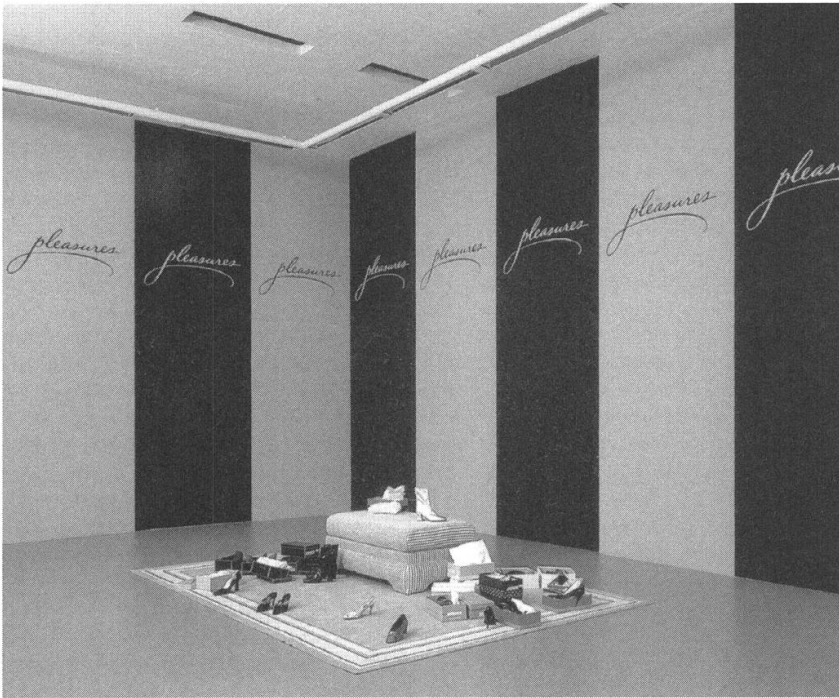
2 Sylvie Fleury, *Shopping trolley ELA 75/K, Shadows Dissolve Naturally*, gilded, Nr. 7, 2000, Private Collection



mension and the promises they make, or by parodying them, or, reflecting today's trend towards branding, by positioning themselves primarily as brands in which the 'products' play only a secondary role. Taking as examples the Swiss artists Sylvie Fleury, Urs Lüthi and Com & Com, who have explored the phenomenon of branding and media consumption from this perspective since the 1990s, these positions will be briefly discussed here.

'Take' 1: F for Fleury, or femininity as a lifestyle dimension

In 1990 the Genevan artist, who is now internationally famous, presented luxury shopping bags including their contents – the result of an afternoon shopping tour – for the first time at the Galerie Rivolta in Lausanne. These presentations of objects as sculptures and ready-mades had been realized 'with a credit card' (Eric Troncy). The bags (fig. 1) or logos of brand names or smart boutiques used in later works as murals and the slogans from the world of advertising and consumerism written on walls or in neon signs were to become the artistic trademark with which Fleury established herself in the international art system.⁹ For the age of the beautiful people, luxury, glamour and the aggressive display of wealth to which the artist refers in her work had dawned. Brands mutated into superstars, superstars into brands, and art and



3 Sylvie Fleury, *Untitled*, 1992, and *Pleasures*, 1996



4 Stephanie Senge, *Who puts who in the bag?*, sculpture, 2003

fashion, which have been in cahoots at least since the advent of Pop Art, entered into – and maintain – an increasingly close relationship.¹⁰ Fashion labels have not only become the theme of exhibitions and taken the White Cube by storm,¹¹ but also ape the exhibition strategies of the art system¹² in the way they present their products in the luxury boutiques. The art system in turn focuses on this theme, as Andreas Gursky's *Prada Series* or Fleury's stylish arrangements demonstrate. The interpenetration of art and the world of brands, culture and economics, appears to be complete, the symbiosis perfect. The charismatic elegance of both Fleury's *Pleasures* (fig. 3) and Giorgio Armani's exhibitions in the Guggenheim Museum in New York bears witness to this.

The Genevan artist's declaration of faith in the world of luxury products, which in her case is also a declaration of faith in the social group in which she moves, symbolizes her affirmative attitude towards today's world of consumerism and brands, in which art becomes a lifestyle product. By contrast with Stephanie Senge, for example, whose seven-metre-high tower of shopping bags entitled *Wer steckt wen in die Tüte?* (*Who puts who in the bag?*, fig. 4) mischievously combines shopping as a socio-cultural act and a source of identity with a critical component,¹³ Fleury's shopping bags are testimony to an unbroken complicity between art, fashion and consumerism

that is characteristic of western art in the 1990s.¹⁴ Fleury's concept of artistic authorship has turned out to be tailored to the 'predominant ideology of our society', as consumerism was recently described.¹⁵ In her *Shopping trolley* (fig. 2), whose handle is decorated with slogans, the act of buying in the luxury segment becomes a ready-made, stylized into an icon of consumerism and a fetish. Removed from the banal commonplaceness of the trolley in Duane Hanson's *Supermarket Lady*, Fleury's work of art, gilded and placed on a pedestal, glorifies the act of buying.¹⁶

With her ready-mades and installations, the Genevan artist refers to the revival of a conservative ideal of a glamorous femininity, which is celebrated as so-called post-feminist and post-ideological. Even if today – by contrast with pre-war modernism – buying and consumption no longer bear feminine connotations per se¹⁷ and only a certain range of products in the western world is especially oriented towards women,¹⁸ as a rule the visual images and 'lifestyle' used to advertise products are clearly determined in terms of gender. As such they have something to say about the predominant gender culture to which Fleury, or Prince in his cowboy series, resort in their clichéd and stereotyped concepts of femininity and masculinity. This aspect, the subject of intense investigation in advertising,¹⁹ but neglected in terms of branding, is a central component in images. It is a well-known fact that it is images that determine the success and cult status of a brand.

Like Prince, Fleury employs an appropriative procedure that does not alter, or scarcely alters, the objects she appropriates. Her authorship seemingly discreet, Fleury constructs the femininity discussed above that is indebted to the realm of luxury. However, the artist does not seem to be physically involved in it, but remains absent and invisible. She and the gender to which she belongs are merely symbolized and represented by high-heeled shoes or in *Lagerfeld Boots*.²⁰

Fleury extends and penetrates this cosmos of a female world constructed by the world of brands early on in her work – which renders it fictitious, since, like Cindy Sherman's female figures in the *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–80), it employs and exaggerates conventional gender- and role-specific stereotypes. As of 1991, the artist also refers to areas with masculine connotations such as motorcycles, luxury cars or space rockets. Fleury's *Plymouth Barracuda* and *Buick* (1991) and *First Spaceship on Venus* (1994)²¹ express the artist's subtle irony, wit and humour, her potential to undermine the world of consumerism, art and art history through the feminine element,²² which sets about peacefully invading and colonizing male domains. The seats of Fleury's cars are strewn with fashion magazines. Rockets and spherical monitors from the realm of space and science fiction are presented in candy colours. They are covered with shiny materials or garishly coloured fur. The objects and attributes of a once heroic cult of

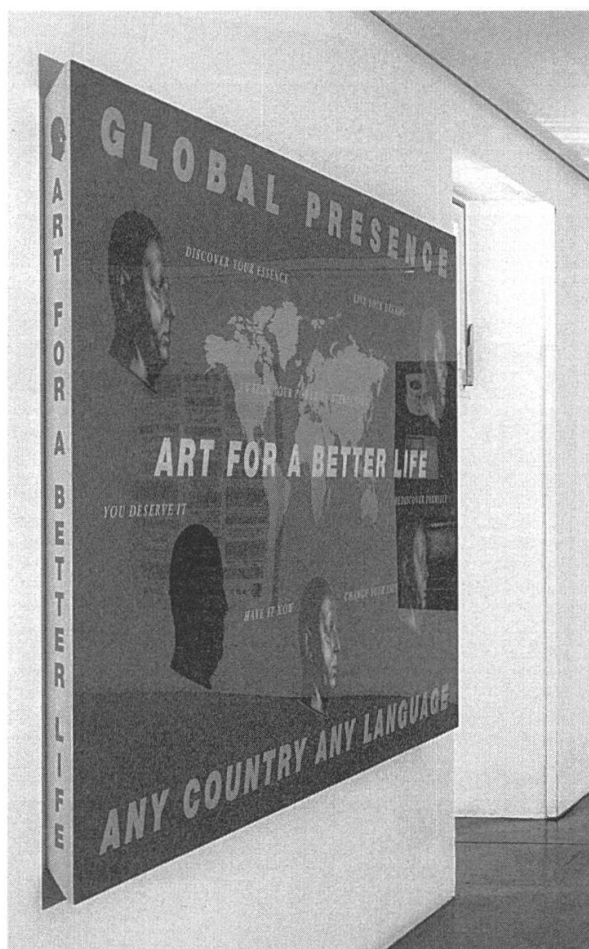
masculinity are now fluffy or glittery, on display, stranded and having capitulated, as it were, or are impudently presented, disguised with white fur, at the exhibition *Freie Sicht aufs Mittelmeer* (1998) in the venerable Füssli Room at the Kunsthaus Zurich. And in works dating to the 1990s, Fleury transforms the masculine icons of Classical Modernism into feminized Mondrians trimmed with artificial fur, wittily and laughingly rendering obsolete the masculine idea of the avant-garde.

5 Urs Lüthi, *Trademark – I'll be your mirror*, 1972/2001 (from 'art for a better life', Venice 2001)



'Take' 2: L for Lüthi or appropriation as the art of surviving comfortably

Urs Lüthi presented his *trademarks* at the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001. They are part of his series of works shown there entitled *art for a better life* with which he represented his country at the Swiss Pavilion.²³ At the beginning of the third millennium, with these *trademarks* – nine self-portraits created in the 1970s – the 'picture-taking self-promoter' (Max Wechsler) takes a retrospective look at what once helped him to create a copyrighted 'personal brand'. For with these *self-portraits* and *number-girls* he had provided the art market with an identifiable 'product' that at the same time eluded any clear-cut gender classification:²⁴ by means of androgyny, a form of gender contingency, so to speak, that emerged in early modern Dandyism and in international Dadaist circles, as cultivated by a number of exponents and stars of the film, art and music scene at the same time as Lüthi.²⁵ The artist mockingly undermined the masculine ideal at the time of the Cold War, presenting himself as a



6 Urs Lüthi, *Global presence – art for a better life – any country any language* (from 'art for a better life', Venice 2001)

catamite 'mimicking a woman mimicking a man' (Bernd Mattheus).²⁶ In works such as *Lüthi weint auch für Sie* (Lüthi weeps for you, too) or *I'll be your mirror* (fig. 5), he undermined the socio-political educational habitus of the 1968 cultural revolution by assuming the pose of the 'exemplary sufferer' and a figure onto which fantasies and desires can be projected. Lüthi declares these pictures, whose sexual ambivalence pose a permanent challenge to both artist and observer, to be initial works of an artistic corporate identity by integrating them into the art currently being produced. Lüthi initiated the development of this corporate identity in his large-scale *placebos & surrogates* project, begun in 1996 and continued to this day as *art for [is] a better life*.²⁷ In this project, Lüthi systematically investigates the visual and rhetoric devices employed by today's advertising and event industry, with its promises of

happiness and a better life. Having recourse to the rhetoric and aesthetic strategies of the world of brands and the media as well as advertising, which the artist intends once again to monopolize for the purposes of art,²⁸ he stylizes himself as an internationally active art entrepreneur. With an entire range of 'products' within the *placebos/surrogates* umbrella brand, the *therapy* and *exercise* series exhibited in Venice, he offers himself and mankind guidance on love, success, happiness, joy, satisfaction, etc., expressed in slogans borrowed from the language of advertising. These slogans are offered to members of consumer and leisure society in words and pictures printed onto mass-produced and cheaply available everyday objects such as beakers and frisbees. In these and other works, the self-observant photographer becomes the involved yet aloof observer and interpreter of the consumerist event industry. The 'Lüthi brand', whose ambivalent extravagance in the 1970s was replaced in the 1990s

by an ambivalent normality and whose quality seal is the artist's profile, aims to place art at the service of a better life through its global presence (*global presence – art for a better life – any country any language*, fig. 6). It offers itself – self-deprecatingly as always – as a design for survival, a contemporary form of a 'visualized thought process'. Yet beneath its superficially attractive appearance, this entrepreneurially managed self-help therapy proves, like the promises of the world of advertising and brands to which it refers, to be a pleasant but ineffective medicine and a makeshift, inadequate substitute: *placebos & surrogates*. For the service-provider Lüthi, who, in the multi-part video installation *run for your life* (2000/1), represents humanity as a corpulent and middle-aged jogger on a moving belt (fig. 7) motivated and driven by the *exercises*, is constantly on the move while staying in one place.²⁹ Not only does he satirize contemporary ideals of youth and beauty, but also appears to be fleeing them, 'running for his life'. A rigid, classically inspired reclining or upright figure of a hedonist and artistic philosopher in other works in this cycle, this wise man of the art system guarantees us an art of surviving comfortably, since *art is a better life*,³⁰ although he does so with Socratic subtlety, with 'Socratic perfidy'.³¹



7 Urs Lüthi, *Exercise*, 2000–1
(part of the video installation 'run
for your life', Venice 2001)

'Take' 3: C&C for Com & Com – or the desire for marketable social sustainability

'What we do for you [the audience] is absolutely honest and absolutely Com & Com'.³²

Com & Com is a company set up in 1997 consisting of the Swiss conceptual and multimedia artists Marcus Gossolt and Johannes M. Hedinger. With the aim of establishing themselves as a label, company and brand on the market, they produce anything

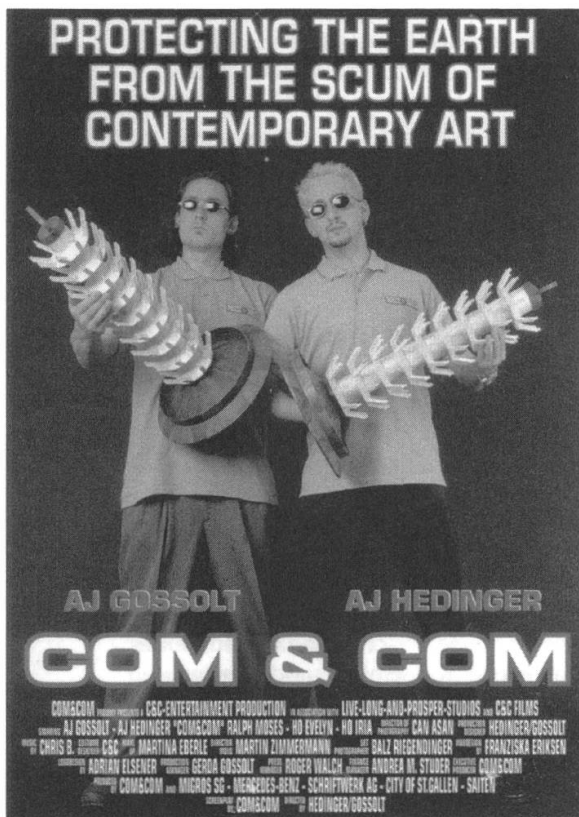
that can be offered for sale in the consumer art market. Having perceived themselves and developed as a brand from the very beginning, creating their image via segments and systematic branding, they imitate and parody the mechanisms of the cultural economy referred to at the beginning of this book, within which the conceptual and symbolic dimensions of brands are consumed rather than the real aspects. This is where the eponymous definition of art and the self, the corporate identity of the busy duo as Com & Com, as commercial communication, and as AJs, art-jockeys, comes to the fore: as art samplers, Com & Com remix the established interplay between art, consumerism, commerce and branding on various levels and employing different strategies of seduction, manipulation and provocation.³³

Com & Com approach this via a broad spectrum of services and 'products': they exhibit their work, curate, teach, give lectures and organize symposia. They give interviews and call press conferences, do their own public relations work. They develop art-specific and socio-political concepts. They go on advertising and promotional trips, produce CDs, music videos, films, books, plays, merchandising products, and more besides.³⁴ Their self-deprecating and exaggerated experimentation with the im-

ages and icons, formats, strategies and mechanisms of the cultural economy, aims to reveal its production and marketing mechanisms and manipulations. They thus appropriate, reproduce or simulate the mass-media products and services offered by the entertainment industry, advertising and branding, making the concepts of original and fake, reality and myth, humour and seriousness central themes in their work.

In addition, Com & Com Holding and its 'wonderful world' has long since been represented in a global network, not least in the American and Arabian market, and now also in the booming markets of Asia – Japan, China and Singapore.³⁵ They ensured their ideal company successor at an early stage – via *The Next Generation* – in the style of the early commercials of Benetton, a cloned United Colors community.

Equipped with a cheap plastic version of Duchamp's bottle dryer as a new super weapon, they save mankind from the scum of contempo-

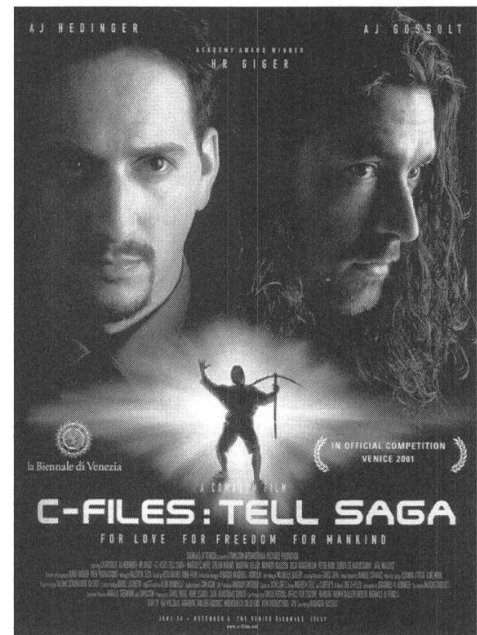


8 Com & Com, *Protecting the Earth from the Scum of Contemporary Art*, 1997–8, exhibition poster

rary art (*Protecting the Earth from the Scum of Contemporary Art*)³⁶ as new 'MIBs', *Men in Black* (fig. 8). Or they fence their way through the world of exemplary masculinity as duplicate Zorros, fighting for love, honour, humanity, fame and commerce. Or, as sons of Switzerland, they rush into the headlines and to their deaths 'for the glory of my country' in *Side by Side* (2002). They spare neither the sacred icons of American Pop Art nor the holiest relics of Christianity, neither Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Can* nor the Turin Shroud (*The Shroud of Com & Com*, Turin Biennale, 2002). And they constantly live according to their innermost neo-Swiss conviction as 'Yuppies', young art professionals: 'Size does matter' (*Com & Com*, 1999).

They have launched themselves as a neo-Dadaist star label with projects like *Mocmoc* (since 2003) and *GUGUS-DADA* (since 2004) that places provocation – as an attention-seeking and communications tool – at the service of a marketable social sustainability.³⁷ For according to the duo, art must be responsive to changes in fundamental social issues, and make those issues the subject of discussion. It must offer something with which people can identify – beyond mere 'lifestyle' or therapy.³⁸ Based on this objective for their brand concept, Com & Com address a wide audience and take on a large number of social and media-related roles.³⁹ In the sense of Boris Groys, they act as mediators and simulators of today's media, consumerist and brand world.⁴⁰

A further major objective they have pursued so far is to take the traditional Swiss identity, and put it up for discussion anew, introducing a masculine 'sexy Swissness' with undertones of American pathos. In the musical *Tell Star* (2002) or in their *Swiss Trilogy*, with *C-Files: Tell-Saga* (2000), *I love Switzerland* (2002) and *Side by Side* (2002), they exaggerate popular clichés about Switzerland. They compose a new version of the Swiss national anthem or, transforming Schiller's drama *William Tell*, in a trailer, a 'making of' and a screenplay of a film that does not exist, they assume the role of agents of the Swiss Bureau of Investigation (SBI) à la *X-Files* (fig. 9) on a journey back in time to the thirteenth century, to save their native land – as well as the ailing genre of Swiss film.⁴¹ Or with *Mocmoc*, mentioned above, a Pokémon-like figure of fable, they help the little town of Romanshorn develop an ambivalent and hotly disputed city brand by inventing a legend of how the town was founded. The brand can also be marketed through a range of products such as an audio book, man-size soft toys, choco-



9 Com & Com, *C-Files: Tell Saga*, 2000, poster, Venice Biennale, 2001

late sweets, souvenir articles, T-shirt transfers and more besides.⁴² Their art campaign, *GUGUSDADA*, also operates with similar commercial mechanisms that shake up social taboos. The project rewarded a couple living in Switzerland with CHF 10,000 for naming their newborn child DADA. With this tricky project à la 'Truman Show' (1998), Com & Com have provocatively raised the problematic issue of advertising with children and explored the boundaries of modern marketing of personal rights. *GUGUSDADA*, developed for the 89th birthday of the Cabaret Voltaire, provides the Dadaist movement with a cosmopolitical 'living ambassador' and a 'human ready-made', as it were. The 'living ambassador' and the movement, which perceived itself as a brand from the very beginning, serves to distribute a product range that extends from special Bibi dummies to romper suits of the fashion label 'erfolg' (success) to the maxi-single with children's songs entitled *Gugusdada*.

Com & Com pursue their wish to produce art dealing with central societal problems in the projects that have been mentioned on various levels therefore and by means of different strategies and themes, which also allow the change in their work to be apprehended. Thus, for example, the exhibition and film project discussed above, *C-Files: Tell Saga* that was presented by the artists at the Kunsthhaus in Zurich in 2000 and at the Venice Biennale in 2001, is a work that refers to the identity crisis and quest for a new national identity that spread through Switzerland during the 1990s. For when William Tell, a character from the thirteenth century, suddenly reappears in the intensive care unit of a Lucerne hospital, it is also the (primitive) Swiss nation that is lying on its sickbed or, when he wakes from his coma, the country also does. This would present the opportunity for a definition through rediscovery, and paraphrases from Swiss artistic icons from Füssli to Hodler stand as the sponsor for this. Mysterious journeys through time represent the different phases of a process of self-discovery on the part of the Swiss people; the ruptures in and the facets of this process are expressed in the multitude of allusions to themes, images and quotations from literature, art history and entertainment industry. The imaginary science-fiction-cum-historical film advertised in the *C-Files* carries to its limits the current trend whereby trailers develop into a genre in their own right and render almost superfluous the films that they are actually presenting. In the sculpture *Mocmoc* in Romanshorn – the work's name is an anagram of the artists' label – this idea and that of the town brand are wittily intercut and the national argument level is transferred to a local one. By means of feints and fantastic tales that have given rise to controversial discussions, and that are comparable to those customary during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period for the establishment of town patrons or soteriological images, the artistic duo constructed for their 'icon' from Romans-

horn its identity and 'heilsgeschichte' (sacred history). And finally in their art action called *GUGUSDADA* they managed to create from the 'Nabel der Welt' (the centre of the world) – the memorial plaque created by Hans Arp in 1966 for the 50th anniversary of the Cabaret Voltaire in the birthplace of the avant-garde art movement – with its sacred connotations, a human ready-made. It is known that such was the way in which the wild and famous-infamous Dada Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven liked to introduce herself.⁴³ This action transferred the discourse from the national or the town and local levels (in *C-Files* and *Mocmoc* respectively) to an artistic, art institutional and individual citizen's rights level.

Sylvie Fleury, Urs Lüthi and Com & Com have been introduced here as examples of various ways in which artists today explore the world of brand consumerism and the media. To sum up, it can be noted that all three share an attitude of postmodernist irony with which they pursue their appropriative approach, which also includes a recoding of the appropriated material, to a greater or lesser extent. Whereas Fleury seems to be only indirectly present in her installations and objects, Lüthi and Com & Com are, all at once, the material, the medium and the projection surface.

As a product of consumerism, Fleury's art perceives itself as a lifestyle 'service' for a luxurious, fictitious culture of femininity for the uppermost social class. In this luxury world of the rich and the beautiful, the feminine establishes itself as a socio-cultural category by means of brands, labels and slogans or high-heeled shoes, make-up, fashion accessories and more besides. The artist is able to use her presentation strategy, directed as it is towards a surface glossiness and elegance, in order to impart poetry, an aura and glamour to the cult of goods. The labels and brands and their images become objects of fetish, which precisely in the partly unpretentious form of their presentation unfold their effect and their power of seduction. Fleury's female cosmos thus shows that it is not ruled, instrumentalized or 'branded' by the world of fashion and of trademarks, as is the case for Daniele Buetti's ladies of luxury mentioned at the beginning of this article. Fleury's glamour world shows itself rather to be an area of society and of lifestyle in which the feminine can hold its own in an independent fashion and can appropriate for itself domains of the (post)modern consumer and art realms which have been invested by the masculine. In the context of this appropriation, artistic and art-historical positions are subtly questioned and aesthetically encoded with humour in Fleury's fur-clad avant-garde icons.

While Fleury, with her homage to the world of consumerism and brands, orients her installations of objects towards the presentation strategies of luxury labels and products in luxury boutiques, and thus assimilates art and the world of brands, Com

& Com – sometimes almost to the point of being indistinguishable – employ the formats and mechanisms of the entertainment industry. With their mass media art marketing, which repeatedly employs popular male clichés of sex and business, Com & Com focus on important social issues of our (Swiss) media and consumer-oriented society. Implementing their conceptual art actions by parodying and exaggerating the well-rehearsed economic and media mechanisms of the culture industry, permanently manoeuvring between the original and the fake, Com & Com stand at the end point, so to speak, of the postmodernist simulation of reality and its experimentation with constantly reversible reversals. For this reason, Com & Com are ‘traitors, educators and critics of the mass-media conspiracy in equal measure.’⁴⁴

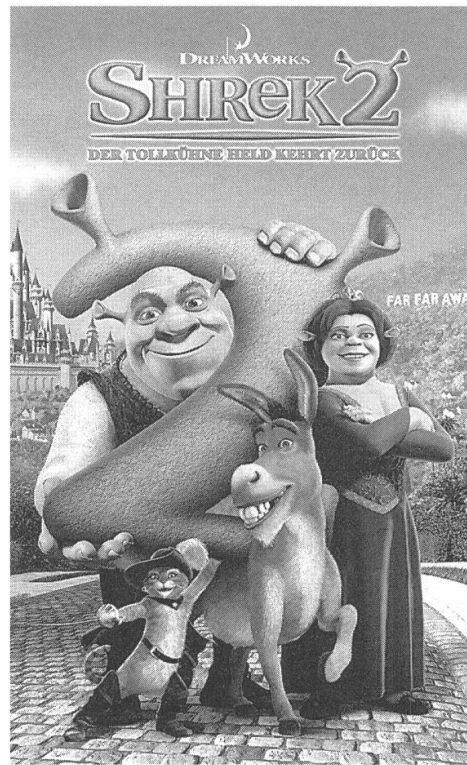
The cosmopolitan ‘company philosophy’ of the Lüthi label – which includes among its central themes in *placebos & surrogates* contingency in our mass culture at the intersection of individual, society and cosmos – oscillates between these two poles – that of Fleury on the one hand, and Com & Com on the other. Lüthi’s approach and method of appropriation are directed towards recognition and marked by a self-analytical aspect. His ‘products’ and trademarks, which he, as a globally present ‘artistic entrepreneur’, places at the service of a multi-cultural society, establish themselves as a guide to and as a lucid expression of a better life or survival by means of an intellectual and aesthetically sublime art. This does not regard itself as a gender-specific lifestyle offer, but rather as a form of elevated philosophical life therapy. It merely adopts the worlds of promise found in advertising in order to be more present and effective in a renewed form in a consumer and event society.

The three positions discussed here always also involve issues of implicit or explicit artistic authorship. In Fleury’s case, this is mainly articulated in the work of art as acquisition; in Lüthi’s case, in the reflection on the rhetoric and aesthetics of the advertising medium, and in the case of Com & Com in the appropriation and exaggeration of formats and media of our culture and consumption industry.

The ‘final take’ and ‘fair prospects’

The parodies of the various market segments of the culture industry inherent to the performances of Com & Com have been reflected and enhanced in recent years by a series of computer-animated cartoon films whose highpoint to date have been the cult cartoon films from Dreamwork Pictures, *Shrek 1 & 2* (fig. 10).⁴⁵ In this story, based on a children’s book by William Steig about – so the publicity for the film tells us – ‘tyrants, monsters, heroes and earwax’, the green monster Shrek (voice: Mike Myers) in league with an incessantly chattering donkey (voice: Eddie Murphy) frees Princess Fiona (voice: Cameron Diaz), who is cursed (or blessed) with reality – and

the entire world of fable and fairytale in western culture – from the clutches of a tyrant, Lord Farquaad (voice: John Lithgow) (*Shrek 1*). A foppish puss-in-boots à la Zorro (voice: Antonio Banderas), kings that ultimately turn out to be frogs, and pretty-boy princes who shake their hair breezily like in the shampoo ads, continue to occupy the scene (*Shrek 2*). Fiona and the intelligent anti-hero Shrek, who make old-fashioned virtues such as love and tenderness cool again, as well as the other figures in the two cartoon films, parody today's star system, the toned and sexy club scene, and the values and mechanisms of bedazzlement of the culture industry. Indeed, at times they mock mercilessly. The artistically and visually sophisticated cartoon films, produced by Aron Warner, John H. Williams and Jeffrey Katzenberg, allude to the products, codes and processes of visual presentation employed by brand consumerism and mass culture. Quotations from films, gags and allusions to James Bond and other entertainment films or fairytale cities based on Disneyland in the kingdom of 'Far Far Away' (*Shrek 2*) – which satirize the dream factory Hollywood with its Oscar awards – become an entertaining, culturally critical commentary by means of appropriation and overlapping, and settle old scores with the kitsch of the American way of life. In this world, which needs heroes, it is now the 'alien creatures' who are the heroes. The Disney-style 'old fairy tales' with whose illuminated pages Shrek wipes his backside right at the beginning of the film (*Shrek 1*), have had their day. The new wellness zones are stinking marshes, the new cult figures are good-natured, corpulent ogres, the new heroines are thickset and a dab hand at the martial arts. 'Reality' is better than ideality or simulation. The consumer and event society in which artists of the Appropriation movement have been socialized since the 1960s is dismantled in the conclusion: 'And they lived happily ugly after'. In other words, the 'final take' on fair prospects.



10 *Shrek 2, The return of the super-cool hero, 2004, DVD and video cover, Dreamworks*

- 1 Concerning this development, see Dan Cameron, 'Die Kunst und ihre Wiederholung', in Volker Bohn, ed., *Bildlichkeit. Internationale Beiträge zur Poetik*, Frankfurt am Main, 1990, pp. 269–322. On the concept of art, most recently Wolfgang Ullrich, *Was war Kunst? Biographien eines Begriffs*, Frankfurt am Main, 2005.
- 2 This development was encouraged after the Second World War in the United States and Europe by artists' training at the academies, where artists have also been systematically introduced to the principles of marketing since the 1970s and 1980s.
- 3 On appropriation, see Stefan Römer, 'Appropriation Art', in Hubertus Butin, ed., *DuMonts Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst*, Cologne, 2002, pp. 15–18; 'Appropriation Now' (thematic issue), *Texte zur Kunst*, vol. 12, no. 46, 2002. On the artist as an interpreter and mediator of the world of the media and brands, see Boris Groys, in Carl Haenlein, ed., *Richard Prince. Photographien Photographs 1977–1993*, exh. cat., Kessner-Gesellschaft Hannover, Hanover, 1994, p. 11.
- 4 Cindy Sherman, 'The Making of Untitled', in Cindy Sherman, *The Complete 'Untitled Film Stills'*, Munich, 2003, p. 4.
- 5 See Richard Prince, in Haenlein 1994 (see note 3), pp. 22, 23.
- 6 Concerning the star and diva system, see Elisabeth Bronfen and Barbara Straumann, *Die Diva. Eine Geschichte der Bewunderung*, Munich, 2002; Wolfgang Ullrich and Sabine Schirdewahn, eds., *Stars. Annäherungen an ein Phänomen*, Frankfurt am Main, 2002. See also the exhibition entitled *Superstars. Das Prinzip der Prominenz in der Kunst. Von Warhol bis Madonna*, Kunsthalle Vienna, 4 November 2005–22 February 2006. The catalogue planned for the exhibition had not yet been published when this essay was written.
- 7 On Marlboro, see Matthias Horx, 'Er reitet und reitet und reitet...', in *Markenkult. Wie Waren zu Ikonen werden*, published by Trendbüro, Matthias Horx and Peter Wippermann, eds., Düsseldorf, 1995, pp. 436–69.
- 8 For Sierra's hair-dyeing performance at the Venice Biennale in 2001, which was financed by art galleries and Schwarzkopf, see Ana Palacio, ed., *Santiago Sierra 50th Venice Biennale*, exh. cat., Venice Biennale, Venice, 2001.
- 9 Peter Weibel, ed., *Sylvie Fleury. The Art of Survival*, exh. cat., Neue Galerie, Graz, 1993; Adrian Dannatt, 'Von Lacans Trieb zum Rodeo-Drive. Marketing und Minimalismus in Fleurys Fiktion der Weiblichkeit', *Parkett*, 58, 2000, pp. 84–8.
- 10 See Ulf Poschardt, 'Kunst und Mode', in Hubertus Butin, ed., *DuMonts Begriffslexikon zur zeitgenössischen Kunst*, Cologne, 2002, pp. 158–63.
- 11 See the essay by Holger Liebs in this book, which refers to Armani and Chanel.
- 12 See Christoph Grunenberg, 'Wunderland – Inszeniertes Spektakel der Warenpräsentation von Bon Marché bis Prada', in Max Hollein and Christoph Grunenberg, eds., *Shopping. 100 Jahre Kunst und Konsum*, exh. cat., Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2002, pp. 17–37, quoted from p. 17. The artist Stephanie Senge recently drew attention to this topic in her project and art prize entitled *Kunst für Konsum* (2003). See *Stephanie Senge: 'zu viel ist nicht genug'*, exh. cat., Junge Kunst, Wolfsburg, 2004, Munich and Wolfsburg, 2004, pp. 48–51.
- 13 Senge 2004 (see note 12), p. 60.
- 14 Cameron 1990 (see note 1), p. 300.
- 15 Boris Groys, *Topologie der Kunst*, Vienna, 2003, pp. 47–58, quoted from p. 47. See also Boris Groys, 'Der Künstler als Konsument', in Hollein and Grunenberg 2002 (see note 12), pp. 55–60.
- 16 The tradition of this ready-made was established in 1963 by Christo, who wrapped up a shopping trolley. Besides Hansen, see also the shopping trolley by Maurizio Cattelan (*Less than Ten Items*, 1997).
- 17 Women have legitimized their presence in public via shopping since the advent of Modernism. For the feminine connotations of consumption and shopping, see Anne Friedberg, "'... also bin ich' – Der Käufer-Zuschauer und Transsubstantiation durch Erwerb', in Hollein and Grunenberg 2002 (see note 12), pp. 62–7, quoted from p. 65; Rachel Bowlby, 'Défense d'afficher – Plakate, Frauen und die Modernität', in *ibid.*, pp. 85–9, especially pp. 86ff. Much of Emile Zola's novella, *Le Paradis des*

- Dames*, published in 1883, is set in a huge department store.
- 18 This was recently investigated for the car industry and is the general conclusion of an analysis by Rick Seireeni's Studio Seireeni of the 'brand architect group' conducted in 2000. While American consumers generate sales of USD 1.8 trillion, female consumers create a turnover of USD 4.3 trillion. Nevertheless, as Seireeni proves, relatively few products are designed for female buyers, unlike the Japanese market, where important brands apparently offer product ranges designed especially for women.
 - 19 For idealized femininity in the world of the media and consumerism, see Nancy A. Walker, ed., *Women's Magazines 1940–1960. Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, Boston and New York, 1998; Nicole M. Wilk, *Körpercodes. Die vielen Gesichter der Weiblichkeit in der Werbung*, Frankfurt am Main, 2002; Dora Horvath, *Bitte recht weiblich! Frauenleitbilder in der deutschen Zeitschrift 'Brigitte' 1949–1982*, Zurich, 2000; Katja Hertin, *Lexikon der weiblichen Klischees. Von Amazone bis Zicke*, Bergisch Gladbach, 2005.
 - 20 For more information on these works, see S.F. Sylvie Fleury 49000, exh. cat., museum für neue kunst/zkm karlsruhe, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2001.
 - 21 See Sylvie Fleury, *First Spaceship on Venus and other Vehicles*, 24th International Biennale of São Paulo 1998 – Switzerland, Berne, 1998.
 - 22 On the feminine element in Fleury's work, see Peter Weibel, 'Subversion der Kunst durch das Feminine', in Weibel 1993 (see note 9), pp. 12–15, 60–1. See also Eric Troncy, 'A Rolls is a Rolls is a Rolls', in *ibid.*, pp. 22–3.
 - 23 *Urs Lüthi, Art for a better life. From Placebos & Surrogates*, XLIX Biennale di Venezia 2001, published by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture, Berne, and Edizioni Periferia, Lucerne and Poschiavo, 2 vols., Berne and Lucerne, 2001.
 - 24 See Lüthi in an interview with Marco Meier and Doris Krystof: 'Die Hoffnung, eine Spur von Wahrheit zu finden', *du*, June 2001, no. 717, p. 90. For the *trademarks*, see Michelle Nicol, 'Urs Lüthi TM', in *Urs Lüthi 2001* (see note 23), pp. 105–19.
 - 25 Peter Gorsen, 'Die Geschlechterentspannung als Formprinzip und ästhetisches Verhalten. Versuch einer Standortbestimmung im Kapitalismus', in Jean-Christophe Ammann, ed., *Transformer. Aspekte der Travestie*, exh. cat., Museum of Art, Lucerne, 1974, no page.
 - 26 Cited after Beat Wyss, 'Dandys Trauerarbeit', in *Urs Lüthi 1990*, Helmhaus Zurich, Stuttgart, 1990, pp. 38–53, quoted from p. 38.
 - 27 See Max Wechsler, 'Placebos & Surrogates: Die Wirklichkeit der Simulation, oder der Weg zum Glück', in Flurina & Gianni Paravicini and Peter Zimmermann, eds., *Placebos & Surrogates*, Lucerne and Poschiavo, 1999, 5 pages (n.p); Max Wechsler, 'Urs Lüthi: Das Leben als ambivalente Kunstfigur zwischen Extravaganz und Normalität', in *Urs Lüthi 2001* (see note 23), pp. 7–94. See also note 30 and 31.
 - 28 Lüthi: 'Art was the godfather of advertising. For a long time advertisers learnt from us artists. Now it's the other way round. Art is again learning from the rituals of the mass and media society and the strategies of advertising how it can become effective in the media' (*du* 2001 [see note 24], p. 87).
 - 29 On this series of works, see Heiner Georgsdorf, 'Stärker als sein Fels', in *Urs Lüthi 2001* (see note 23), pp. 121–42.
 - 30 Rainer Michael Mason, *Urs Lüthi. Art is the better life. Tableaux 1970–2002*, exh. cat., Musée Rath, Geneva, 2002.
 - 31 Concerning this expression, see Ursula Pia Jauch, 'Klar und deutlich war noch nie etwas. Urs Lüthi zwischen Buddha und Sokrates', in Flurina Paravicini-Tönz, ed., *Urs Lüthi. The Remains of Clarity II / III (Art is the Better Life)*, Lucerne and Poschiavo, 2005, no page.
 - 32 *Com & Com. The artists formerly known as Marcus Gossolt and Johannes M. Hedinger*, no. 3, 2nd edn, Zurich, 2000, p. 1; see also <<http://www.Com-Com.ch>>.
 - 33 'The aim of Com & Com is to establish Com & Com as a label and a company as well as the definition and person of the AJ (art jockey) on the market' (quoted from Com & Com), cited after Konrad Bitterli, 'Kunst zwischen Kommerz und Kommunikation', in *Com & Com 2000* (see note 32), pp. 3–7, quoted from p. 3.
 - 34 See Thomas Feuerstein, 'COMmix & COMMunity', in *Com & Com 2000* (see note 32), pp. 11–13, quoted from p. 12; Suzann-Viola Renninger, 'Hinein in die Welt! Das Künstler-

- duo Com & Com', in 'Dienstleistung Kunst', special issue, *Schweizer Monatshefte. Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur*, vol. 85, nos. 6/7, June/July 2005, p. 4.
- 35 See Com & Com's Asia newsletter of 25 July 2005: Asia flashback 1/2 (China, Japan and Singapore, where they are part of the Biennale, 2006).
- 36 See the C & C parody of AJ Gossolt and AJ Hedinger, in: *Com & Com 2000* (see note 32), back page.
- 37 On Mocmoc, see Johannes M. Hedinger and Marcus Gossolt, eds., *Kunst, öffentlicher Raum, Identität. Mocmoc, das ungeliebte Denkmal*, Zurich, 2004, and <<http://www.mocmoc.ch>>. On the 'GUGUSDADA' art project, developed in collaboration with the Cabaret Voltaire, see <<http://www.gugusdada.ch>>. In 2005 Com & Com conducted a symposium on the theme of provocation in collaboration with Nose Applied Intelligence at the Cabaret Voltaire; Johannes Hedinger also conducted a tutorial at the University of Zurich. By way of comparison, see the film and picture projects executed at the same time or currently being processed: *The Big One* (2005) and the abstract oil paintings currently being produced, inspired by this road movie, filmed in the American desert between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. See 'Dienstleistung Kunst' 2005 (see note 34).
- 38 For example, see the project developed by Com & Com for the 'Mobile Academy' in Berlin, 'United Colours of Germany', in which 20 filmmakers from 13 countries made critical advertising films on Germany.
- 39 See Johannes Hedinger talking to Anna Lehninger: 'Kunst muss schmerzen, um wirklich etwas zu bewegen', *Denkbilder*, no. 19, Zurich, September 2005.
- 40 See Boris Groys, 'Die Politik der Autorenschaft', in *We love you. Selected works and essays 1997–2003*, Zurich, 2002, pp. 124–7.
- 41 See *We love you 2002* (see note 40), and the script: Johannes M. Hedinger Com & Com, *C-Files: Tell Saga. Das Drehbuch zum Film von Com & Com mit zahlreichen Filmfotos*, 2nd edn, Zurich, 2001.
- 42 See Hedinger and Gossolt 2004 (see note 37).
- 43 On the Dada Baroness see Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa. Gender, dada, and everyday modernity. A cultural biography*, Cambridge, Mass., 2002.
- 44 Anselm Franke, 'In der wirklich verkehrten Welt ist das Wahre ein Moment des Falschen', in *We love you*, see note 40, pp. 194–5, quoted from p. 194.
- 45 See Rolf Giesen, *Lexikon des Trick- und Animationsfilms. Von Aladdin, Akira und Sindbad bis zu Shrek, Spider-Man und South Park. Filme und Figuren, Serien und Künstler, Studios und Technik – Die grosse Welt der animierten Filme*, Berlin, 2003, pp. 378ff.

Summary

Post-war modernist artists have intensively explored the new conditions created by the mass media and trivial culture, for example, by investigating brand consumerism and the world of the media in their work, predominantly exploring and parodying the dimension of gender-specifically determined lifestyle and the potential promises made. Or, reflecting the current trend towards branding, artists position themselves primarily as brands in which the actual 'products' play only a secondary role. This essay discusses these positions as exemplified by the Swiss artists Sylvie Fleury, Urs Lüthi and Com & Com, who have investigated branding and media consumption from this perspective since the 1990s.