

## I Like the Art World and the Art World Likes Me

### Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Project Space

#### New York

While art about the art world risks accusations of insular navel-gazing or of hypocritically cashing in on critique, it can provide a fascinating anthropological document of the context in which we operate. In 'I Like the Art World and the Art World Likes Me', curated by artist Eric Doeringer, the most successful works called attention to issues generally repressed from art exhibition, such as gender bias and economic inequalities (though race was conspicuously absent from the conversation) and the accompanying feelings of anxiety and disdain elicited by trying to make it as an artist in the post-boom, post-bust, personality-driven art world of today.

Jennifer Dalton's drawing *Every Descriptive Word or Phrase Used to Describe Artists and Their Work in Artforum's 'Best of 2007'* (2008) inventories in neat cursive script all the modifiers used to classify artists and art works in a superlative-laden year-end feature of *Artforum*. Divided into columns by gender, the descriptors ('magisterial' versus 'unexpectedly intimate', for instance) may be illuminating, but more telling is the fact that the list of phrases generated about men and their creations is almost four times as long, spilling from the wall across the floor. Size really does matter, and while Dalton offers no analysis of the data she has mined, the swath of blank space on the women's side speaks for itself. The gender divide is addressed more explicitly in *How Do Artists Live?* (2006), a slideshow presenting data from Dalton's anonymous Internet survey asking several hundred artists about their lifestyles and finances. Colourful, hand-drawn charts show how an artist's sex relates to his or her tax bracket, whether sound or performance artists make more money, and which sex relies more on day jobs, credit-card debt, or art sales as a source of income.

Other works examine the economic circulation of art by razing economic hierarchies or establishing arbitrary ones. Installed in a grid on the gallery wall, Doeringer's 'bootleg' knock-offs reduce paintings by blue-chip

artists to trading cards, though his guerilla actions peddling his counterfeit wares outside of galleries and art fairs are more compelling than the actual canvases are. Making pricing an integral part of his work, Conrad Bakker sold his carved and painted reproductions of *Artforum* covers from the 1960s ten for the price of an annual subscription, while charging thousands of dollars (the full-page ad rate) for a single painting replicating an advertisement from the magazine.

Conflating economic analysis, art history, and personal history, Ward Shelley's drawing *An Artist's Career* (2004) graphs the fluctuations in price, profit, reputation, demand for, and quality of his art work before and after having 'a very big picture' published in *The New York Times*. Alternative art histories are the subject of Shelley's timeline drawings *Matrilineage, ver. 1* (2008) and *Carolee Schneemann Chart* (2005), which critique the canon through a feminist lens, while Loren Munk's map paintings propose painstakingly researched narratives about artistic communities in New York.

A topic often ignored by mainstream art discourse is the emotional struggle of the marginalized artist who simultaneously disdains, fears, and craves success and celebrity. Laurina Paperina's cartoonish paintings gleefully imagine famous artists being killed by their own work, and Dalton and William Powhida's recession-inspired condolence cards emblazoned with lines like 'I am so sorry for your loss of representation' reek of *Schadenfreude*. Alex Gingrow, by day a mat-cutter at a frame shop, documents snarky or vapid comments she has overheard at work in her drawings appropriating gallery provenance stickers. Skewering a culture in which art gossip trumps criticism, Charles Gute's wordsearch paintings disguise the names of power dealers and art stars in formally austere text-based works, equating the search for aesthetic meaning with hunting for boldfaced names. Powhida and Jade Townsend's *Art Basel Miami Beach Hooverville* (2010), however, advances the most acerbic critique in the show. Lampooning the art fair's rampant consumerism, the satirical drawing depicts in impressive detail a burning shantytown teeming with caricatures (identified by name) and inside jokes about predatory dealers, crooked collectors, prostituted curators, and starving art students huddled in a bread line outside the fair. The unannotated masses gather around a rickety structure in front of the fair's entrance (identified as the artists' own 'Siege Tower', built of 'wood, rope, steel, iron will [funding needed]'), ready to storm the gates. That an inkjet print of the original pencil drawing is exhibited here suggests that the artists have apprehended the art of delivering excoriating critique in a market-savvy fashion.

Priya Bhatnagar

Jennifer Dalton  
*How Do Artists Live?*  
2006  
16mm slide

