

From Crisis to Action?

We have already entered into a period of “generalised crisology”. In local or global (glocal) level, in every domain of individual or collective life, discourses and narratives elaborate images and analyses of the “crisis”. Using this Greek word in its meaning of “no functioning in a normal way”, makes us forget the second, among others, meaning, that of “the correct, precise and wise judgment”. In this spirit it is urgent to use the term crisis at least in its double meaning.

The domain of art is not out of the production of the different versions of crisis or this “criso-graphy”. However some crucial questions have emerged concerning the complex of “arts-market-crisis”.

1. To which degree is it safe or well-thought to analyse the relations between art and market under the threat-actuality of the crisis of the global/local capitalism? We must be careful not to make the hypothesis that the market might over-determine the artistic action, or at least, to analyse the artistic action in a ‘crisis’ and ‘non-crisis’ environments in a symmetrical way. In other words, we must be careful not to use different perspectives i.e. see ‘crisis’ and ‘non-crisis’ as two different universes.
2. Is it pertinent to approach art and market with the same analytical tools, if such tools exist? Of course, art economics has contributed to elucidate the dynamics of art in the market in the recent years, on national and international level, but the two domains being in continuous interaction, they preserve nevertheless their specificity. In this sense, in which state of **the** art will a theory or an analysis of art be in relation to a theory and an analysis of market? In other words, can we propose a unified approach or two different sets of views and epistemological insights are needed for art and the market? Should the talents and imagination of an analyst of the art and those of an analyst of the market be equally shared, unified or distinguished?
3. In an extremely simplified scheme we could imagine the change of artistic endeavour as a circle: “*artists > artworks > market > society > culture > artists*”. To speak about art market it is clear that we have to simplify even more the above virtuous or perverse circle. But beyond the foundations of the above circle, the question is how does this circle work in a national or regional scale? How this regional and national scale is influenced? Does it influence the international scale? Specifically, how does the above circle work in Europe and in China in the present global context? In spite of the differences, is it possible to point out themes-issues of common interest and/or convergence? Or, at least, is it possible to test or to assess which priorities (and by whom) could be situated in each part of the above circle? Have the Chinese and the European art worlds put the emphasis on elements of artistic change by taking in consideration the conditions of ‘crisis’, ‘non-crisis’ and ‘exit from the crisis’? Who pays more attention to production, to society or to culture? Who focuses on ateliers of production and who at social reception? Is it possible to understand the reasons behind these choices?

4. It is clear that the institution of art exceeds the art market. Also, the long series of actors (artists, critics, sponsors, social groups) and cultural patterns create a fertile ground in order for art to be able to grow and flourish. The metaphor of a flourishing flower should be tested in different societies regions and cities. If this kind of experiment takes place, will the final result, when persons, institutions and agencies speak and write, be a cacophony? To which degree a dialogue in this overproduction of discourses and narratives is feasible? How are we sure that we debate on the real issues and problems related to art and market?

The above four questions have to be adapted and implemented in the framework of China-Europa Forum. In the meetings of Salonica (03/2009) and of Nanjing (07/2009), we need to imagine the ideal situations for persons/representatives of the artistic and ideological currents such as institutions, actors, analysts, practitioners, artists or other professionals of the visual and performance arts, to arrive to a common problematique. In other words, a set of coherent questions concerning the interaction of art and market (in 'crisis', in 'non-crisis', in 'an exit from crisis' or in a 'perpetual crisis') need to be derived and, simultaneously, to conceive a set of feasible artistic projects for the near future. It is clear, that the problematique and the common actions could not ignore the actuality of the crisis, but at the same time an opening, in spite of and beyond the crisis, has to be invented in the scale and the spirit of the Forum.

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