

IT'S COMPLICATED

Art Market Schools

De Appel is starting a training programme for gallerists, and at various universities, the art market is a separate course of study. Non-profit art schools and art dealers are developing increasingly stronger ties. Will it soon be possible to separate the two?

by Maxine Kopsa

Money's the new black. According to Nicolas Galley, the director of the University of Zurich's brand-new Executive Master in Art Market Studies due to start in September 2011, money and curation have never been far apart. '[The] Venice [Biennale] wouldn't exist without galleries (a country's pavilion is often financed for a large part by the participating artist's gallery) hence the cries that [Art] Basel was the new biennial.'

That curators and dealers share a close relationship is certainly not news, but whether an institution's reliance on a commercially predisposed entity is a good thing, is a question one has to keep posing. 'Curators and art dealers have always been in contact,' Nicolas Galley continues. 'The "Löwenbräu-Areal" in Zurich, gathering institutions and commercial galleries under the same roof (Migros Museum, Kunsthalle, Hauser & Wirth, etc.), is a good example. Long before, Leo Castelli was inspired and influenced by the powerful MoMa director Alfred H. Barr and the latter bought several paintings (for the MoMa) at the opening of Castelli's Jasper Johns solo show. It is probably in the 70s-80s that some artificial boundaries were created.'

What caused the erection of these 'artificial boundaries' is another discussion; the fact remains that production costs need to be paid by someone, and that often these are covered by dealers. Large-scale extravaganzas such as the Venice Biennale might not be able to exist anymore without gallery backing; but what about museums, Kunsthallen, a critical institution like *documenta*, or smaller art venues around the world? What does gal-

lery backing entail, exactly? And if it weren't the galleries who were forking over (to be exact: advancing), then wouldn't there be other backers, just as partial, to take their place?

Private/public lender and receiver relationships are complicated, perhaps more so in the art world than in any other arena where grants play a necessary role. And this is simply because capital gain is never the aim – at least, it must never be a blatant objective, which dictates that most if not all financial support of the visual arts must appear as a kind of charity, i.e. altruistic, for the greater good, egoless; with the ensuing consequence that the intricate power relations become a social web governed by emotional interactions akin to those at an adolescent's sweet sixteen party.

MARKET AND UNIVERSITY

Cross-pollination between the curatorial and the commercial is growing as never before. The last few years have witnessed a sharp acceleration in the professionalization of the art market. According to Mary Rozell, director of Art Business at Sotheby's Institute in New York, the artworld has changed dramatically in the last twenty years: 'When this shift began in the 1980s, the only option for the necessary kind of graduate study was to piece together one's own program.' Rozell herself earned a law degree and then supplemented her studies with an M.A. in Art History at the Courtauld Institute. A reason for the increase in art-market related studies on offer today follows logically: 'Training for arts profession-

als has lagged behind this evolution. Traditional academic courses of study focused on art history, while valuable, simply do not equip students with all of the skills and vocabulary needed to forge a career in today's international artworld.'

Clearly we've gotten over the cliché of art and artists being able to subsist on only the most noble of substances (air and water) and that rents, food and work are all romantically and magically paid for. The days that even a sponsor's small logo on an invitation or website was a logo too large are pretty well over.

GALLERIST PROGRAMME

So what is happening? The De Appel Gallerist Programme sums it up quite perfectly, I think. Eyebrows have lifted at its mention, people have scoffed at the idea. And indeed, it is quite a surprising move for a reputable non-commercial institution to set up the first gallery school in the world – though seen through the light of the above, perhaps just what the doctor ordered. In fact, perhaps just short of brilliant. Honestly, after my initial gut reaction – one of disbelief – the next was envy, in a good way. Mind you, I do feel I could give anyone a complete course on how to start a gallery, covering most of the necessities in a few days, and mean no belittlement by this – after six years of working in a commercial gallery myself, I feel I know most of the ins and outs. And that's just it: it took me six years to accumulate the finer points – and learn to love them. Reason enough to think: why not speed things up?

Christian Raltemeyer & Gareth Long, *Who Invented the Desk?*, 2011. Front Desk Apparatus, New York



In September 2012, De Appel, together with the Fair Gallery, is beginning a school that has until now never before existed, a gallery school that has the potential to shift and mould an area of expertise as the curating course before it once did. The gallery world – much like the curating 'world' say fifteen years ago – is one of the only corners of the professional artworld one can enter and set up camp without any papers whatsoever, no letters of reference, no diplomas. It is, *was* until now (until September 2012, to be exact) the last state of apprenticeship. And this apparently was getting on the nerves not only of the institutions who need to deal with gallerists and their unwritten rules of play but also of gallerists themselves, who saw their assistants leave every two years, address book, collectors and sometimes artists in hand

How, wondered gallerist Jan Mot, representative of the Fair Gallery, and Ann Demeester and Nathalie Haartjes from de Appel, could the situation be altered and improved so as to create more transparency and, at the same time, allow for the administration of a knowledge that is still predominantly orally transmitted? The Gallerist Programme, with lectures, excursions, group meetings and workshops culminating in an internship at a 'mentor' gallery (of choice), aims to finally be able to set down the information usually learned through years of on-the-job practice: anything from taxes to shipping to gallery typology. This includes, of course, questions surrounding the duties and expectations of gallery/institution relationships: what is the protocol for the later sale of works that have been produced by the institution? What is the correct percentage cut and how long after the show can an institution claim it? How does discount work for the museum as opposed to the private collector? When does one not pay VAT? What is a 'mother gallery' and how can it maintain its authority? The list of particular situations is long and has indeed never been carefully and centrally addressed. Which makes the Gallerist Programme the filler to a very large gaping mother of a hole in the art market.

Interestingly, given that potential competition will come from a new crop, it is the big blue chip galleries who will be footing the bill (in order to keep tuition to a democratic minimum). The Fair Gallery

is worth mentioning here, not only as co-instigator of the gallery school but as an example of a new working methodology. The Fair Gallery is a loose collective of four galleries (Jan Mot, Brussels; Hollybush Gardens, London; Raster, Warsaw and gb agency, Paris), all with a strong curatorial program, who seek out alternative approaches to working together within an otherwise competitive system. This can range from sharing an artist to a shared but (guest) curated booth at an art fair to a large-scale project like the Gallerist Programme.² It should be said that, considering the Fair Gallery's position in the Gallerist Programme, one might be led to think that students of the course will be schooled according to their mindset. Granted, this is premature speculation, but still – a more interesting result would be a completely motley range of graduates, not only the curatorially correct followers of Mot and co. but also the unabashedly commercial or the brazenly mid-career.

STOCKHOLM SYNDROME

So, now that the Gallery is being institutionalized, now that money is sanctioned by the institution, *curated* so to speak by both the Academics and the Museum, despite these recent 'improvements', gallerists still hide price lists; one doesn't say 'buy', one says 'acquire'; we go to Art Basel for the Art Unlimited and Statements sections (the large-scale curated 'exhibition' and the small-scale solos); while every respectable art fair has an intellectually-grounded lecture program, and *Frieze*, the mother of all money and brains cross-pollination, is a critical magazine *and* three art fairs (including an Old Masters fair).

One doesn't need to be particularly quick to conclude that these are signs of the commercial world's intent to embellish its status. More interesting, however, is the question of whether these superfluities point to a certain kind of Stockholm Syndrome, where Galleries, hostage to the wit of Culture, develop amorous feelings for their captors. This would imply a deep-seated angst on the part of the commercial, an anxiety that it was somehow *less* than its not-for-profit institutional counterpart – which is not the case, or rather, not so categorically the case. It's far more complicated: The Stockholm Syndrome works both ways. It's bi! And instead of eradicating itself, it's only coming up stronger. Like a virus meeting

its match, not its cure, galleries are fearing and loving the institution and the institution is courting the gallery. Amidst all of this murky, messy unrequited/requited *emotion* finally being administered, there is a squelching of the last weeds of intellectual unevenness, where any old-school practitioner still claiming a clear-cut *hautaine* status has lost ground for good. Or, put very banally: Good galleries are looking like good institutions, good critics like good gallerists, good fairs like good biennials. And as the practical gets into bed with the theoretical, they both opt for the sexier lingerie.

If money is indeed the new black, it still does not follow that price is a guarantee of worth. But it does imply that things have gotten more seductively complicated, more intricate and in many ways more sophisticated than they once were. Where maybe 30 years ago (or maybe even only five?) many a museum director would cringe at the idea of genuine collaboration with a gallerist (and I mean *genuine*), now the landscape is such that there lies a basis for a true mixing of ideas, dialogue and methodology.³ This is of course – it must be said – a trickier terrain to manoeuvre while sustaining criticality. But doable. Question is, can we take it even further? Within this new landscape, in the near future, is it imaginable that a gallery be situated, quite literally, in a museum?

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- 1 The Art Business program at Sotheby's Institute of Art was founded over 40 years ago in London and has been offering full M.A. degrees for more than a decade.
- 2 The Royal College of Art's graduating M.F.A. curating exhibition called *Fair*, which created a functioning art fair as a degree show, is worth mentioning here. Clearly before its time, it was organized in 2002.
- 3 Not to say that the commercial can take care of all visual art production – on the contrary, Galleries will continue to help, collectors will continue to support; but were public funding to come to a halt, we would have to relinquish any hopes for grand experimentation – and not only that: also the writing of our cultural present and cultural history.