



"Art Advisors Lisa Schiff and Leslie Fritz and Artuner founder Eugenio Re Rebaudengo explore capitalism in the art world"

Written by Fan Zhong

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This week, the steroidal art market topped itself: an annual report found that more money was spent on art in 2014 than in any year prior—all told, a record \$54 billion. That number can only cause even more hysteria and handwringing over the growing lack of originality in art because insatiable collectors hunger for more and more of the same stuff that sells. But what if some contemporary artworks are not symptoms of capitalism but actually indicators of its eventual toppling? That's the tantalizing idea behind "Open Source: Art at the Eclipse of Capitalism," a series of exhibitions opening March 12 at Galerie Max Hetzler in Berlin, and March 13 at its sister gallery in Paris. (It will also be online at the sales platform Artuner.) Curated by the art advisors Lisa Schiff and Leslie Fritz, and Artuner founder Eugenio Re Rebaudengo, the shows were inspired by the economic theorist Jeremy Rifkin's 2014 book *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism*. In the book, Rifkin predicts that, in the near future, top-down corporate structure will be forced to share the marketplace with fully-networked world whose citizens, fluent in tech and armed with 3-D printers and renewable energy, will shift the production of goods into their own homes and studios. This online collaborative commons, as Rifkin calls it, will usher in a third industrial revolution.

It's a big idea, one with considerable allure, but not immediately apparent in application to the art world, which is weird, insular, and comes with its own set of funky bylaws, financial and otherwise. This didn't deter Schiff, who became enamored with Rifkin's work after reading his 2001 book *The Age of Access*, which contained an idea—namely, that the rich were becoming less interested in material objects than the social access their purchasing power can buy—that does not lose much in translation to the art world. "In a weird way," she says, "people now pay to go to art fairs. They want to just buy a part of the art world." Schiff approached Rifkin with the idea of putting together a group show of artists working since 1990—post-Internet, technically speaking—who have embraced the forces driving his theory: digital technology, online collaboration, green energy, and an open-source attitude toward intellectual property. "Why not take these artists and historicize them?" Schiff says.

The crew she and her co-curators have assembled is surprisingly motley: young stars like Hugh Scott-Douglas, Alex Israel, and Ian Cheng—who worked in visual effects and makes simulations whose characters move in a startlingly lifelike way—share screen time with establishment artists not typically aligned with the broadband generation, the likes of Frank Stella, Christopher Wool, and Albert Oehlen, who started making paintings on his Texas Instruments laptop in the early '90s. Other works take on capitalism's entropic bill, like Bernadette Corporation's two-channel video featuring footage of the BP oil spill, while artists associated with relational aesthetics, like Pierre Huyghe, are included for the interactive community they create in their art.

Much of the show benefits from the cool afterglow of the many screens present in the New Museum's current Triennial, which has given shape to and generated anticipation for where this new ethos of art-making is headed. But bringing capitalism into the discussion—in a show curated by three art dealers, no less—is an unusual twist, one that might make observers squeamish. "When you put 'the eclipse of capitalism' into the title," Schiff says, "well, it begs for backlash."