



Fashionization

"Damien Hirst, Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing"

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Fashionization

There is no doubt that we all live in consumer society. The heterogeneous debate about the consumption regime and its affect on our everyday life has been going on for centuries both in political and management circle. There is evidence that the phenomenon of consumer society has been part of continuous development which has spanned over the ages of human existence and accelerated during sixteenth-century in Europe and onward during nineteenth-century in USA and other part of the world (Desmond, J. 2003)¹. However more recently after the fall of Berlin wall, the collapse of Soviet Union and the monopolization of the world politic as Dewey² believed the capitalists have even sought monopoly power over art markets, as a result the illusion that capitalist development delivers freedom, because freedom is delivered through choice and choice involves the creation of markets, consumers and consumption (Dholakia and Dholakia, 1985)³, has been more wide spread and dominated the management studies. Galbraith⁴ in 1958 and Schor⁵ in 1999 and later on Shankar, Whittaker & Fitchett⁶ in 2006 questioning the notion of consumers, consumption and its affect on our life, and the role of marketing in the contemporary world. Those authors provided examples of researches that shown the increase of consumption has not improved the quality of human life and in many cases has even contributed to more stress and uncomforted feeling. They even criticized the misuse of marketing as in many cases marketers/media did not just try to satisfy consumers' needs but also to create/invent needs by misrepresentation of reality and push the society toward materialist and over consumption.

The paradox here is that due to increase of competition in market place in one hand and the illusion that freedom is delivered through choice in the other hand, marketer has introduce more and more new products/services to consumers market, not purely base on consumers needs but more base on what marketers believe that the consumer may want/desire. In addition as Schwartz⁷ (2004) highlighted, the increase of choice not only cause paralyze but also increase the

¹ Desmond J., (2003) "Consuming behaviours" Palgrave Macmillan, pp 2-24

² Guillet de Monthovx, P. (2004) "The Art Firm" *Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing*, Stanford University Press, PP 56

³ Dholakia, N. and Dholakia, R.R. (1985) 'Choice and Choicelessness in the Paradigm of Marketing', in N. Dholakia and J. Arndt (eds) *Changing the Course of Marketing: An Alternative Paradigm for Widening Marketing Theory*, pp. 173–85. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

⁴ Galbraith J. K. (1958) "The Dependence Effect" The New Press, New York

⁵ Schor, J. B. (1999), "Towards a New Politics of Consumption" The New Press, New York

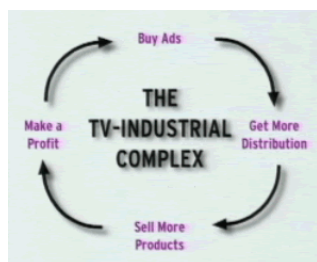
⁶ Shankar, A., Whittaker, J., & Fitchett J.A., (2006) "Heaven knows I'm miserable now", *Marketing Theory*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 485-505, Published by SAGE

⁷ Schwartz, B. (2004) "The Paradox of Choice." New York, Ecco

probability that consumer get bored or dissatisfied faster of any choice they make even if they chose the best possible option. What marketers have established here is the fashion aspect of industries whatever industry they are in. This is what we can call the Fashionization of industries, as many of those new products/services are driven by fashion not the needs of consumers (Gennaro, 2007)⁸.

The question is what should the marketer do? And what is the role they want to play to improve the human life quality? One option would be that marketer take more social responsibility and become good citizen and use their knowledge collectively to cool-off (demarketing) this trend of Fashionization and over consumption. However this has to be a collective action that all follow, otherwise those who take social responsibility will lose their market share to those opportunists who try to increase their market share. So we all know, in reality this option will not happened without the interference of government and restricted legalization. But as experience shown the increase of government control has been more harmful to society's well-being even though it may be able to stabilize consumption.

Other option would perhaps be as Seth Godin⁹ the marketing guru suggested in 2003, marketers in order to maximize their benefit and be successful in the market there the consumers have many choices they should emphasize to make their products/services unique and remarkable from other alternative. In addition companies should even restructure their promotional and communication strategy that suit the fashion marketing. As I said whatever we do, we are all in fashion industry now; the difference is that the people in fashion industry they know that they are in fashion but for the reset of us, we have to



adjust ourselves to Fashionization. Godin (2003) suggest that marketers should avoid the TV-industrial Complex and probably ignore the early and the late majority consumers in their promotion activity as they are good to ignore commercial, when there is too many choice and limited times, instead the marketer should focus on innovators and early adopters in the market as

they are most often very good listener and more likely to spread the idea. However even this option has its own limitation as a long term strategy in the market with ever-escalating consumers expectation. As to be innovative and differentiate yourself from the others, marketers may have to introduce new products/services on regular bases which will even escalate the paradox of choice further.

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<http://www.visioncareproducts.com/ME2/Audiences/dirmod.asp?sid=3A9702BD8CB24219AC0872F316703D5B&nm=&ype=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=8F3A7027421841978F18BE895F87F791&tier=4&id=3E814894B1E44198B8CA3CF579D24BC9&AudID=28EBA89F5F874675BCE10DE3DCF0D05B> 13 November 2008

⁹ http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/seth_godin_on_sliced_bread.html 13 November 2008

It appears it would almost, be impossible to solve the dilemma without a shift in the marketers and the society's perception of reality and the meaning of human life. Certainly it is needed to introduce something more than rational scientific tools into the management and sociological studies, as it dose appear that we try to interpret the irrational world with the rational tools of science. Perhaps Cassirer (1946)¹⁰ was right by saying mythical thinking helps understand our environment when rational understanding of it (logos) is exhausted, when logical arguments do not give a satisfying understanding. Here one clear option would be, to welcome the aesthetic thinking into the management and sociological studies as a new source of knowledge creation and understanding of the phenomenon. Perhaps it is needless to say that I am not proposing the aesthetics thinking as ultimate solution to this dilemma but more as a aid on the way... as Ross¹¹ (2007) said only art has a power comparable to that of politics, namely reframing and expanding what can be perceived and reconfiguring what is thinkable. Its worth to highlight that with aesthetics I do not refer to theory of taste nor solely to art theories but more as Rancière¹² (2004) pointed out, as the distribution of the sensible that enables modes of articulation, which means ways of perceiving, thinking and saying. In the other words the sensory knowledge and felt meaning of objects and experiences (Hansen, Ropo & Sauer 2007)¹³ and the sensory assessments of how we feel about anything. However maybe it is needed more clarification that, how could marketers and management benefit of aesthetic judgment in their everyday work. Referring to Pierre Guillet de Monthovx aesthetics begin with subject rather than the object and not taking the subject for granted neither, but converts him or her into a question to be examined from a dynamic and genealogical perspective (Mandoki, 2007)¹⁴. For example marketers and managers should also consider the emotion and the feeling of their stakeholders about the company and its products as an alternative to the regular 4P and transactional marketing. With an aesthetic perspective marketers and managers would be able to address questions and issues that are fundamentally different from instrumental or ethical concerns (Dean et al 1997)¹⁵.

As research suggest marketing involved not just managing exchanges between stakeholders, but much more complex human interactions. Complexity can be both beautiful and sublime, it doesn't have to be dangerous and scary. People get nervous about complexity, when actually they could appreciate it, see the potential in it, like they do when they go to a good art show (Guillet de

¹⁰ Lindqvist, K. The myth of management as art and the management of art as myth

¹¹ Ross, K "Introduction: Regime Change. Jacques Ranciere and Contemporary Art", *Artforum* (March 2007): 254-255

¹² Rancière, J. (2004) *The Politics of Aesthetics*, continuum, London and New York: Continuum

¹³ Hansen, H., Ropo, A., Sauer, E., (2007) "Aesthetic leadership" College of Business Administration, Texas Tech University

¹⁴ Mandoki, K (2007) "Everyday Aesthetics" *Prosaics, the play of culture and Social Identities*, Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, Mexico PP 57-60

¹⁵ Dean Jr., J. W., Ottensmeyer E., Ramirez R., (1997) "An aesthetic perspective on organizations" In Cooper C., Jackson, S., "Creating tomorrow's organizations" A handbook for future research in organizational behaviour, Wiley, Chichester

Monthovx, 2008).¹⁶ Managers and marketers could learn from art and artists that how to deal with this complex situation. You don't have to love the physical art work of every artist but they have a way of approaching problems and engaging in process that can be extremely helpful says Michelangelo Pistoletto.¹⁷

Science Ltd, Damien Hirst's Art Firm

"One of the great things about Damien is that he is that rare thing, an artist who understands commerce," says (the business manager of Science Ltd, Hirst's main art-producing company) Frank Dunphy to Sean O'Hagan in 2007 in an interview a few days after Damien Hirst becomes the most expensive living artist in history.

In 2007 Richard St. John after 7 years of research and 500 interviews published his book "The 8-Traits That Lead to Great Success". St. John listed Passion, Hard work, Focus, Push, Ideas, Good, Persist and Serve as the characteristics that help an individual to success in their life. Interestingly looking at Damien Hirst as one very successful artist and art firm entrepreneur who has built an empire that embraces the making of art, the selling of art, the buying of art and the acquiring of huge swathes of property in London, Mexico and Gloucestershire you will find many of those traits. Despite what many may think Hirst as a youngster was not very good at art when he took his A-level he achieved "E" grade in art and was refused admission to Leeds College of Art and Design but with some persistent he managed to get into Leeds College the year after and managed to complete his first degree. After the graduation from Leeds College he applied to Goldsmiths, University of London which he was again refused a place at the first time due his earlier poor performance but subsequently after some more persistent and hard work to improve his portfolio and getting good at art making he managed to get into Goldsmiths in 1986 and completed his study in 1989. St John highlighted that successful people serve others something of value, and not just in a charity sense. As it is known Hirst breakthrough come in 1990 after he had meet Charles Saatchi the advertising guru who was thinking to create an art firms in between, to link commerce with culture, Hirst managed to serve Saatchi with something of value that Saatchi wanted. Subsequently Saatchi in 1991 offered to fund whatever art work Hirst wanted to make which resulted that Hirst short-listed 1992 Turner Prize but eventually won the Turner Prize Award in 1995 with the exhibition of "I Want You Because I Can't Have You" & "Mother and Child, Divided"¹⁸. But Hirst & Saatchi relationship was damaged in early 2003 when Saatchi exhibited the Mini car that Hirst had decorated for a charity with his trademark spots as a



¹⁶ Guillet de Monthovx, P. & Statler M., "Aesthetic play as an organizing principle" In: New and Emerging Approaches to Management & Organization. Eds. Barry, D. & Hansen, H., Sege Press (2008)

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ See Appendix 1



serious artwork. However the highlight of Hirst & Saatchi relationship was when Kim Chang-II a Korean business man bought one of Hirst sculpture named “Charity”¹⁹ for £1.5 Million from White Cube gallery in London intended to display it in his department store “Galleria” in Seoul. Kim Chang-II did not purchased “Charity” only on the basis of its artistic workmanship but also for its special principal of the emotion, insights, media coverage and feelings that this art

work aroused about his department store. From the commercial point of view Kim Chang-II managed to get more media attention about his department store then he could ever buy with £1.5 Million form any advertising agency. As the same time Kim Chang-II managed to attaché some of the value/image of the art work and the artist fame to his store and helped, with its branding strategy as a fashionable, innovative and in touch with international contemporary art, as the result “Galleria” managed to attract visitors who were interested of this art work into the store. From investment point of view this has been very good investment, as not only this purchase has helped the store with branding and promotional activity but also he still own the sculpture which the price is much higher today considering the recent success of the artist. However Hirst & Saatchi relationship was broken after this, as Hirst used most of the money made from the exhibition “Romance in the Age of Uncertainty”²⁰ to purchase back most of his work from Saatchi and terminate his contract.

To study Hirst from the management perspective it is interesting to know even though he sometimes get involve into the physical production of his work but he has almost always had assistants and as a moment his company employ 120 people to help him in production. According to himself he has only painted 5 of hundreds



spot paintings himself and the remaining has been done by his assistants and probably the best spot paintings by him are the one done by Rachel Howard. In that aspect Hirst function in the company is more like manager, the creator and coordinator of the art firm, that is probably the main reason that many has compared him to Andy Warhol and his factory style of art production but for this reason some have even criticized his work and questioned its authenticity. Hirts believe the creativity is in developing the concept not in execution, however he value the execution as a useful and necessary skill but not sufficient for art making. Having work myself as computer animator quite often I face the question which hardware or software I have used to create the animation and in reply I sometimes say buying a expensive pen dose not make you a writer... However in reply to origin of his source of

¹⁹ “Charity” The 22 foot (6.7m) 6 ton sculpture was based on the 1960s Spastic Society’s model, which is of a girl in iron leg holding a collecting box. In Hirst’s version the collecting box is shown broken open and is empty.

²⁰ <http://www.whitecube.com/exhibitions/romanceintheageofuncertainty/> 24 November 2008

inspiration Hirst says art comes from everywhere. I guess that most be some thing in it as even Sir Paul Smith the British fashion designer said “you can find inspiration in everything and if you can not look again” Paul Smith even used this as the title of his book in 2001. However Hirst said if I hear something interesting, that might be a title for a work of art I would write it down, my work is my response to my surroundings.

The dance of Eros and Apollo

Katja Lindqvist in her paper “Eros and Apollo: the curator as pas-de-deux leader”²¹ describe aesthetic leadership by using Greek mythology, in this aspect the force of creativity can be found in the figure of Eros and the need for distinction and moderation in Apollo. Eros is the creative force, giving a concept or an individual element a distinct gestalt. Apollo on the other hand is the god of reason, temperance, clarity and harmony, foresight, and masculinity. Lindqvist describe aesthetic enterprises as parties where Eros is the honorary guest and Apollo the host. She adds, those characters can be combined in one person or be departmentalized within an institution. In the case of Damien Hirst it is apparent that this has been departmentalized within the institution of Science Ltd. As he has in many occasion talked about his assistants and admired their execution skills specially Rachel Howard who dose most of the paintings, further during an interview with Sean O’Hagan in 2007, Hirst said that “I really wouldn't be here now without Frank, He's a pain in the arse sometimes but he's straightened me out about money. Basically, he taught me not to be afraid of it. Before he came along, I was like a punk, really. I didn't care about money. Or I pretended not to care. But when the figures start to get high, it's hard to pretend you don't care. It scares the shit out of you. He got me over the fear. I'd still be drinking and I'd probably have found some way to fuck it all up if Frank hadn't come along.”



Frank Dunphy the business manager for Science Ltd who acts even as Hirst's agent, deal cutter, empire builder and as some describe him even as a mentor and a father figure play the role of Apollo in Hirst's Art Firm and Damien has taken the role of Eros providing motivation, inspiration and passion of the firm. Apollo is needed for the party to happen, for everything to be taken care of. Eros secures the spirit of the party and Apollo secures its actual happening Eros and Apollo have to engage in a mutual dance for the project to materialize (Lindqvist, 2007)²².

²¹ Guillet de Monthovx, P., Gustafsson, C., Sjöstrand, S. E., (2007) “Aesthetic Leadership” Managing Fields of Flow in Art and Business, Palgrave Macmillan, PP 195-209

²² Ibid

Thinking Outside the Dealer

It was quite many speculations around Hirst unprecedented move in September 2008 to bypass the dealers and galleries by auctioning his collection of 223 of his recent work "Beautiful Inside My Head Forever" directly through Sotheby in London. The auction brought him a total of £111 million, much more than estimated, despite the recommendation of some art dealers that not bid on the auction.

Before the auction some people had said that Hirst is killing his gold goose... as they predicting that he will not be able to sale all of his work which would damage his reputation. Some other believed that is caused by the recent financial turmoil and the rumours that he has to layoff some of his employee...but something that most people in the art world were agreed, was that it will change the face of art dealing and have consequences for other artist. According to Hirst himself in press conference before the auction, that is just the way he tries to reach new audiences who would not necessarily buy from the galleries and he knows that is risky thing... but if you want to do it...do it big, it's nice not to play safe.

This change of strategy to reach broader audience become more apparent by looking at Hirst recent business contract with Levi's for the creation of 7 pairs of 501@Levi's with Damien Hirst signature Spin paintings for Levi's fall 2008 collection to be exhibited in Levi's shops around the world and be sold through a silent auction for a starting price of £15000. Even for those art lovers who can not afford to buy the limited edition, Levi's has add Hirst & Levi's collection which will be available in the market around December 2008 with a affordable price. The collection is based on three key themes of Damien Hirst's body of work "the skull, spots and tropical butterfly." Those themes that he mentioned as part of his sales pitch before the Sotheby auction that he will not produce any more as art work. (The commercial value/terms of the contract is unknown for the public) There is also a rumour for a similar contract with Vertu for the creation of limited edition luxury mobile phone.



Metaphysical marketing



In the traditional political economy the value of goods and services is explained as either the amount of work put into its manufacture or the usefulness perceived by the individual buyer, in the other words the objective production process or the subjective buyer judgment however the art firm realizes a potential third way of determining value;

a philosophical aesthetic way (Guillet de Monthovx, 2004).²³ Hirst has revealed a clear understanding that demand rests on desire for the real philosophy of metaphysics as Schopenhauer would say. And by creating the balance and mastering over aesthetic play in his art firm, technician, critic and the way to assemble his audience, fearlessly surprise them and emotionally connect with them, Hirst has made his art, work, and created immense value for his work irrespectively if one likes his physical art work.

Through conscious representation of his ideas, Hirst has encourage his audience to contemplate...beyond space or media, and he has managed in a very creative way link art with commerce and build a distinctive brand for himself, even though some has criticized him, saying he is turning more into commercial designer then artist. Maybe in his defence I can quote Andy Warhol when he said "being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art".

In conclusion what marketers/managers could learn from artists is that in a rapidly changing business environment and uncertain future, it could be hard and almost impossible to relay solely on our past experience (experimental knowledge) and hoping that the old science that excluded our body and senses from our mind provide us with the answer. By ignoring our intuition and senses and not being able to make aesthetic judgment we will fall either in formalist or materialist.

We should recognize that Globalization and the Fashionization of industries has completely changed the basic parameters in business environment, and the riskiest thing a company can do is to play safe (Godin, 2003)²⁴ and strive to minimize risk-taking. Radical innovation has often a great deal of uncertainty and risks however Hirst demonstrated how he assumed risks before the auction but cleverly negotiated with most potential collectors months prior to the auction by inviting them individually to his studio and reveal the show. What Hirst did was, as Gummesson²⁵ would probably say, He based his marketing on total relationship marketing and build a personal relation with the potential buyers. Feurst²⁶ would probably describe it as One to One marketing, or referring to Philip Kotler recent lecture in Stockholm University Kotler would probably describe it as High-Touch marketing. But the shortfall for all those descriptions above is that they try to describe the action and ignore the subject. But in my believe Hirst did all the above... by making aesthetic decision and not limiting himself with his pass experience and mastering over the aesthetic play.

²³ Guillet de Monthovx, P. (2004) "The Art Firm" Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing, Stanford University Press, PP 95

²⁴ Seth Godin: Sliced bread and other marketing delights (2003) <http://www.ted.com> 30 October 2008

²⁵ Gummesson, E., (2008) "Total Relationship Marketing" Third Edition: Marketing management, relationship strategy and CRM approaches for the network economy.

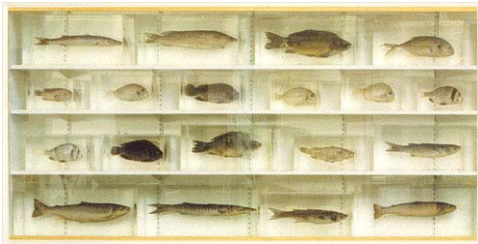
²⁶ Feurst, O. (1999) "One to One Marketing" Liber AB

Appendix: 1

Mother and Child, Divided



I Want You Because I Can't Have You



The love of God, Hirst & Levi's

