

# frieze

## Open Source: Art at the Eclipse of Capitalism

Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin, Germany

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'Open Source: Art at the Eclipse of Capitalism', 2015, exhibition view

Perhaps the only endearing aspects of this sprawling group exhibition – occupying Galerie Max Hetzler’s two spaces in Berlin and one in Paris (of which, I admit, I saw only the Berlin part) and guest curated by Lisa Schiff and Leslie Fritz of SFA Art Advisory and Artuner.com founder, Eugenio Re Rebaudengo – were its apparently inadvertent contradictions. These resulted from an attempt to mould the anti-commodity concept implied in the title – ‘Open Source: Art at the Eclipse of Capitalism’ – to the kind of large-format, pictorial art installation familiar to a gallery founded, not on dematerialized conceptualism, but on nurturing the careers of postmodern painters and photographers who emerged in the 1980s and ’90s. Big commodities occupied the three physical exhibition spaces, but also appeared online, in the form of installation shots and images on the sales platform Artuner.com, which hosted a digital version of the exhibition. It’s possible that the clash of values could have been ironically challenging, and it was occasionally dynamic. Take Michel Majerus’s *Tron 3* (ocker Pantone 143) (1999), which dovetails a silk-screened vignette of early digital-era graphics into the corner of a square of yellow emulsion: if you removed the silk-screened canvas and completed the square, it could have been a wall painting by Günther Förg, an artist of the gallery’s original programme.

The exhibition’s press materials enlisted the American economist Jeremy Rifkin to interpret the internet as a community-minded idyll, bent on ‘social’ rather than ‘market’ capital (the distinction is Rifkin’s). But the most discernable narrative here was the trickle-down strategy of sanctioning younger artists by surrounding them with a few market mainstays (Richard Prince, Frank Stella, Christopher Wool). Otherwise, the juxtapositions were piecemeal and incoherent, with only the stalest signifiers of digital culture to connect the contingencies of the sprawl.

If gathering works that the curators believed 'have attended to [the economy] critically in opposition to the singular discourse of the art market' was a claim that was hard to swallow, it did reflect the self-denying, anti-production conceits that characterize the work of many of the younger artists here. Reena Spaulings's *Later Seascape* (2015), for instance – produced by a floor cleaner programmed to smear interior-design-quality household paint over canvas – denounced its own production as indiscriminately mechanical. The one-liner of its title, which pitches a resemblance to late paintings by JMW Turner, pre-empted any possible critique of its own cynicism by suggesting that it merely reflects the cynicism of the culture, or its collectors (that posh paint was meant for their apartments). From Megan Marrin & Tyler Dobson's *Postkartenständer* (*Postcard Stand*, 2014), on which photo-realist selfie paintings were offered as postcards stacked among kitschy tourist views, to Allora & Calzadilla's *Contract* (SWMU 10) (2015), a huge silkscreen of the lush, tourist brochure-style palm trees printed over a Warholish sweep of grey paint (a sign of the silkscreen medium itself), representation was shown helplessly submitting to the production which makes it visible.

Given that Andy Warhol is the primary source of a tradition that builds on the interface between the technologically reproduced image and the humanist portrait, it was not surprising that he haunted this show, qualifying its novelties as reiterations or, as in *Contract*, reiterations of reiterations. With its head-like console, Katja Novitskova's electronic baby rocker, *DuetSoothe LX* (2014), did look vaguely figural, but the diagrams of interacting protein molecules printed onto its acetate bib asserted the post-human, sculpture-as-cyborg narrative too heavily. Rendering human limbs as reproducible cyphers, Josh Kline's 3D-printed heads and hands (*Nine to Five*, 2015) cast sculptural figuration, and the human form it celebrated, as a disposable product on a janitor's trolley. Warhol never stooped to such reductiveness because he never assumed a moralistic remove from the burgeoning image traffic he was reproducing. It was always clear that he was as much in thrall to its seductions and rewards as his audience.