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*»Make your living room a mini MoMA! Join the world's most prestigious museums and institutions by acquiring works by artists held in their collections.«<sup>1</sup>*

The above quote, taken from an advert, gives an accurate picture of what art is like when it is run as a business and has its eye on the market. What is more, terms like »image transfer,« »market position,« »ranking,« »speculation« or »value appreciation« are among the terms one often hears uttered in connection with art nowadays. Far removed from that, however, most artists just go about their daily »business« and use the very free and unrestrictive system of art to examine the issues that occupy them, applying visual means and, where possible, to find answers and solutions. Andreas Burger is one of them.

The crucial question that comes up again and again is, of course, what is it that gives a work of art its market value? Who decides on the value, who influences the inflationary spiral, who are the manipulators, how do the mechanisms work, and why is the art canon in museums for contemporary art so similar, right down to the details? These are all aspects that must be left for another day and another place; nevertheless, the sculptor and conceptual artist, Andreas Burger, who was born in Italy but now resides in Berlin, offers an interesting model in a 49-part sequence of A4 sheets. The 49 unique works each consist of glued-on fields from a lottery play slip with 6 out of 49 numbers crossed off. The value of each picture, its price, is the actual amount won for the combination of numbers on it, which in turn depended on how many lucky players had to share the winnings on that particular date. The fact that the pictures are formally similar aesthetically, the identical amount of work invested by the artist in each one, and the similarly identical materiality makes their radically differing prices unjustified. However, the fact that determining prices has nothing to do with material, manual skills, or the amount and type of work required by the artist was already demonstrated by Duchamp with his »Readymades«. As the artist Andreas Burger does not yet enjoy the level of publicity that one would wish for him and his work, the works don't have the slightest chance of profiting from the image transfer that famous artists profit from, and which so impresses the buyer of art. By buying one of his works, the most one can hope for is to be

admired as a person possessing the distinctive quality of being a discoverer and appreciator of artists and their less accessible works.

Notwithstanding this, in his art, Burger – with the enthusiasm of a true adventurer – submits himself to a certain spirit of randomness. One sheet does not have a single matching number, does not win a penny and thus ends as a zero-sum game. Interestingly, this renders it a priceless, and therefore an unsellable piece, and ultimately the most valuable sheet. An ironic, one might even say sarcastic commentary on pricing policies, value creation and the art market.

As I have already referred here to Marcel Duchamp, I can also say that – in the sense of Appropriation Art – Burger »appropriates« one of Duchamp's early works, taking it further by adding an autobiographical appendix. On an object from 2016, which recreates Duchamp's »Bicycle Wheel« and consists of a bicycle fork together with the wheel rim and spokes mounted on a stool, Burger has added an inner tube with a number of patches on it. Every patch on the inner tube, which was used over a period from 7 February 2013 to 17 January 2016, has been exactly dated and thus functions as a record of damage, as a résumé as it were, of the Berlin roads it has cycled on and of Burger's life.

Duchamp actually produced the »Bicycle Wheel« in 1913 for himself only. It was the first object for which Duchamp, according to his own statements, came up with the term »Readymade,« but not until two years later.<sup>2</sup>

The bicycle wheel was nothing more than »a happy idea ..., something I wanted to have in my room, the way one has a fireplace or a pencil sharpener, except that it was not in any way useful. It was a pleasant device, pleasant because of the movements it made.«<sup>3</sup>

The work of the famous anti-artist is degraded by Burger, in an act of blasphemy against art, to become a mere »substrate« as it were on which to place his own work. What might be viewed as »impudence« by admirers of Duchamp is, in reality, an homage to the art revolutionary, but with tongue firmly in cheek and a wink of the eye.

Andreas Burger is among those artists whose work is as disparate as it is interesting, which cannot be reduced either to a material or to a specific theme. His works cannot immediately be recognized as »Burger,« which is, of course, a drawback when it comes to their recognition factor, popularity or market conformity. His work is indeed diametrically opposed to what Hans Platschek has criticized about art that can always be readily identified:

»... Vasarely has been painting the same picture for years; he and other painters with a completely different orientation often limit themselves to a

certain type of work, perhaps because they can't come up with anything else, but certainly, so that one can identify them immediately in collective exhibitions. To put a name to it, they paint their trademark into their works.«<sup>4</sup>

When you face a lack of profitable sales which could guarantee you a living, or you have now other ways of earning money, and you are forced to make your way to the Jobcenter, what ensues is an annoying ordeal as you battle with endless forms and find that you have to prove that you are indeed in need. That's the everyday life of many artists, who can by no means live from their art and do not always have the chance to earn a lucrative income, either »on the side« or full-time. In 2014, this scenario brought Burger the opportunity to create an autobiographical work that he titled »Black Star.« He covered the forms from the Jobcenter with irregularly shaped and eight-pointed black-and-white stars, which until 2012 – in a red-and-white and incisively recognisable design – acted as the logo for the Berlin art association »Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst.«<sup>5</sup> Thanks to the reputation and prominence of the association<sup>6</sup>, which was founded in 1969, the star symbolised a political attitude towards and handling of art, with all the socio-political implications this entailed. The star survives in Burger's work transformed to black, the colour of anarchy.

A sculptural conceptual work must be mentioned here, with which Burger refers to a set body of rules, while at the same time changing this set of rules to provide for a »survival strategy« within the context of the game. To do this, he developed a potential solution for impassable situations when playing chess. He added one block with a row of eight chess squares as a board extension that can be used to help fend off defeat. However, »64/8/72« – the title of the extension to the chess board – as a deliberate violation of the rules, flies in the face of the spirit of chess, where any aid to winning is seen to be not only completely absurd, but also unethical.

In other works, Burger examines with great enthusiasm the bizarre architectural forms that can be found as polystyrene protection in packaging, like the ones used to pack technical appliances. Burger uses the air spaces in between the forms as moulds to create abstract sculptures.

Marc Chavannes, the inventor of bubble wrap – which is so important in the art world – was immortalized by Andreas Burger in 2010 in a bust, the surface of which he covered in indentations caused by bubble wrap.

In a new work, he demonstrated the gradual disappearance of a bust using a procedure over 21 phases. Titled »Reverse Process #1,« the work serves in each case as a mould template for the negative of the sculpture which loses

the precision of its form with every new mould, in the end taking on the shape of a solid cube of plaster.

In September 2017, for his »Horizontal and Vertical Emptiness« exhibition at the Meinblau project space, Andreas Burger will be showing two large wooden boxes that are normally used to transport works of art. They give the visitors the impression that they are attending an exhibition that is still in the process of being installed. At the same time, the imposing dimensions of the boxes conjure up in one's mind how big the works of art packed in them might be, at the same time evoking associations of a correspondingly large studio and depot along with a whole crew of assistants. These are parameters of the success of an artist and are automatically seen to be symbols of his wealth. What the boxes contain, or whether they contain anything at all, is something that Burger deliberately does not reveal to the visitor, using them as cyphers to evoke a mind game.

Visible in the space are two sculptures by Andreas Burger, in which sculpture is intertwined with conceptual art and Appropriation Art. He adapts to a certain extent a work by Jonathan Monk, in which the latter immortalizes himself, with irony no doubt, in classical form, practically Caesar-like and with the tip of his nose knocked off. Monk, who is known to deliberately cite and take further the work of others – naturally of big players on the art market in whose light he likes to bask – himself now becomes the »victim« of a productive »plundering.« It can be said in passing that Monk also served himself from the work of Timm Ulrichs, and yet failed to name him as an inspiration, or simply considered it unnecessary to do so, because Ulrichs' works were not afforded a noble enough status internationally by the market. As such, Monk's work »Translation Piece« from 2002 is very reminiscent methodologically to Ulrichs' work »Übersetzung – Translation – Traduction ... Ein polyglotter Zyklus« (1968/1975).<sup>7</sup>

But, let's return to Andreas Burger, who copied Monk's portrait bust and attached a cast of his own nose to his original replica (excuse my contradictory turn of phrase here, which nevertheless seems very fitting in this case). In another sculpted portrait of Vincent van Gogh, Burger added a cast of his own left ear to the maimed world-famous artist. Burger deliberately celebrates this festival of piracy and citations of the works of Monk, who places himself contextually in a high sphere of art history with the way in which he pursues his work. He brings this method back down to earth when he applies his own nose and at the same time takes Monk's game too far – with great irony – in his bust of van Gogh.

The work of Andreas Burger, whether as a sculptor or a conceptual artist, covers a wide range of different techniques with which he examines, again and again, the aspects of everyday life, cultural history and the art business that interest him. To uniformly and permanently repeat and vary his own works is something that goes against the grain for Burger. For him, art is far more an opportunity to carry out visual research, which he then uses to generate new »images.«

<sup>1</sup> Artspace, A PHAIDON GLOBAL COMPANY, in an advertising mail from 12.7.2017.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* Calvin Tomkins, p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from: Calvin Tomkins: »Marcel Duchamp. Eine Biographie«. Munich: Hanser 1999, p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Platschek, »Der Makler und der Bohemien«. In: Derselbe: Engel bringt das Gewünschte. Kunst, Neukunst, Kunstmarktkunst. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1987, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> On the initiative of Diedrich Diederichsen, then a member of the NGBK Presidium, a process of discussion and identification was interestingly introduced, in the course of which the CI was supposed to be modernised. Ultimately, the logo designed by Gernot Bubenik, which very fittingly symbolises the grassroots democratic and political process of topic identification, together with the distinctive star that moves between comic, explosion and revolution, was swapped for a banal and interchangeable acronym using capital and small letters, which are however the same size. For over forty years, the star had become the well-known and easily recognizable symbol of the art association. The nGbK acronym now looks very similar to the acronym of the rival association nbk.

<sup>6</sup> The »Deutsche Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst«, set up in 1965 on the initiative of Berlin's Senate for Culture, worked in the tradition of a bourgeois art association. The association split in 1969 into the hierarchically managed art association »Neuer Berliner Kunstverein« (NBK) and the »Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst« (NGBK). Which was greatly influenced by the 1967/1968 movement. Many people were involved in setting up the NGBK, but a central figure was the painter Dieter Ruckhaberle, who later ran the Kunstamt Kreuzberg and was appointed the founding director of the Staatliche Kunsthalle Berlin in 1976. He and others briefly stole the membership file, which was necessary to contact members and win them over to become members of the NGBK.

<sup>7</sup> See Ludwig Seyfarth, »Der Künstler, der alle Ideen schon hatte, oder Die wahre Erfindung von Facebook.« In: Kunstverein Hannover, Sprengel Museum Hannover (ed.): Timm Ulrichs. Betreten der Ausstellung verboten! Ostfildern: Hatje und Cantz 2011, p. 149/150.