

self-employment, or rather self-unemployment, the idea that anyone would care for one's specific labor power seems rather exotic.

Of course, labor in the art field has always been different from labor in other areas. One of the current reasons, however, might be that the contemporary economy of art relies more on presence than on more traditional ideas of labor power tied to the production of objects. Presence as in physical presence, as in attendance or being-there in person. Why would presence be so desirable? The idea of presence invokes the promise of unmediated communication, the glow of uninhibited existence, a seemingly unalienated experience and authentic encounter between humans. It implies that not only the artist but everyone else is present too, whatever that means and whatever it is good for. Presence stands for allegedly real discussion, exchange, communication, the happening, the event, liveness, the real thing—you get the idea.

In addition to delivering works, artists, or more generally content providers, nowadays have to perform countless additional services, which slowly seem to become more important than any other form of work. The Q&A is more important than the screening, the live lecture more than the text, the encounter with the artist more important than the one with the work. Not to speak about the jumble of quasi-academic and social media PR formats that multiply the templates in which unalienated presence is supposed to be delivered. The artist has to be present, as in Marina Abramović's eponymous performance. And not only present, but exclusively present, present for the first time, or in some other hyperventilating capacity of newness. Artistic occupation is being redefined as permanent presence. But in the endless production of seemingly singular events, the serial churning out of novelty and immediacy, the happening of the event is also a general performance, as Sven Lütticken called it, a quantifiable measure of efficiency and total social labor.

The economy of art is deeply immersed in this economy of presence. The market economy of art has its own economy of presence which revolves around art fairs, with their guest lists, VIP areas and performative modes of access and exclusion on every level. People have been saying that previews of mega-shows have become completely inadequate for HNWI's. Really important people are only present for the pre-preview.

There are some rational reasons for an economy of physical human presence in the art field: the physical presence of people is, on average, cheaper than the presence of works that need to be shipped, insured and/or installed. Presence puts so-called butts on seats and thus provides legitimacy to cultural institutions competing for scarce funding. Institutions sell tickets or even access to people—this is usually done in the scope of para-academic formats like masterclasses or workshops—and capitalize on people's desire to widen their networks or add contacts. In a word, presence can be easily quantified and monetized. It's a thing that few people get paid for and a lot of people pay for, and is thus rather profitable.

But presence also means permanent availability without any promise of compensation. In the age of the reproducibility of almost everything physical, human presence is one of the few things that cannot be multiplied indefinitely, an asset with some inbuilt scarcity. Presence means to be engaged or occupied with an activity but not hired or employed. It means more often than not to be locked down in standby mode, as a reserve element for potential engagement, part of a crowd of extras to provide stochastic weight.

Interestingly enough, the demand for total presence and immediacy arises from mediation; or more precisely from the growing range of tools of communication, including the internet. It is not opposed to technology but its consequence.

According to William J. Mitchell, the economy of presence is characterized by a technologically enhanced market for attention, time, and movement—a process of investment

