

TO BRIDGE OR NOT TO BRIDGE ...

Art and business consume an enigmatic relation. While they both happily munch on each other, they simultaneously seem to be alienated. This shapes a situation in which business apparently doesn't seem to understand art, or even feels removed from it, while art seems to consider business to be something that might be fruitful, but should be kept at a safe distance. Art and business are thus two separate worlds that still feel some sort of attraction towards each other. Between them there is an enigmatic bridge that is not easy to cross, or maybe even a bridge that doesn't really connect. According to German philosopher Martin Heidegger, in his 1954 essay *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, a bridge is not just something that connects, but first of all something that shapes. In this case the bridge would shape or reshape the world of business as well as the art world.

But how can our thoughts get in touch with the bridging of these two apparently contradicting worlds. What sort of relation do they consume? Obviously there are forms of art such as film, according to Deleuze the highest art form, or architecture that cannot be separated from business. This is different for the fine arts. Bridging (not to be confused with the card game: bridge) doesn't seem to be a necessity, although there is a potency and an attraction. It is this that intrigues Anke Strauß. She wants to know whether a relationship between fine art and business can be consumed and how that could be conducted. In other words what kind of bridging are we dealing with? That is what Anke investigates while she moves in the middle between art and business.

Whenever a researcher wants to understand this concept of bridging it is necessary to be able to understand the specificities of the apparently contradicting worlds. One has to know what business is all about and what art is all about. When reading the book by Anke one quickly notices that she is able to 'get' the world of art and of business. She is capable of tapping into both of these worlds and is even able to find a special potion, the machinic dialogue she proposes, to fold these two into each other. This

embrace turns out to be fruitful. Especially because she, in a rhizomatic way, constantly moves in the middle. Not on the outside looking in, but in the middle of the events.

Moving on from the middle, means there actually is no fixed middle. A middle is excluded, so it is never a position of standing in-between, but more like a situation of ‘with-between’. So you’re together with this moving middle position that creates “moving” thoughts. This can be compared to the ideas displayed in the series *Twin Peaks* by artist David Lynch, where the title implicates the ‘with-between’ of the Twin Peaks characters and especially investigator Special Agent Dale Cooper, who moves between ‘our’ world and parallel dream worlds, and even becomes a ‘Doppelgänger’.

Because of this moving with-between, Anke’s mode of investigation opens up the enigmatic world of art and business and the way they try to indulge in bridging. This bridging is done by something I would like to refer to as connectors. Connectors are some things that bridge. In *Twin Peaks* the main connector is coffee, or to use their specific parlance: ‘deep black joe’, while cherry pie and cocaine are serious runners up. So connectors are needed for bridging.

However, Anke finds out that in her research the suggested connector, namely sausages, gets rejected from the business side of the bridge. This is then curiously a reason why art and business do not open up and mingle in the case of Product & Vision, the bridging attempt between art and business that is central in her book. It is the business side of the bridge that is not into barbecued sausages or munching on them in the same space as the artists. Sharing a sausage is apparently one bridge too far.

But it turns out that the sausage is not the real problem. It is something else. It is the managers wondering: “‘Who are we?’, ‘where do we come from’ and ‘where do we want to go?’” (2017, 96). They are thus driven by lack of identity that causes insecurity. This insecurity makes them, almost desperately, cling on to their own positions and thus weakens the urge to bridge. This meant that: “... the unpleasant feeling of control slipping through their fingers created a situation where several employees and the management became rather self-conscious with regard to their organization, asking themselves what the artists would see and whether it would be beautiful or interesting enough” (ibid., 101). So there was a feeling of unease that hampered opening up. Bridging became a ‘no-go’.

This was amplified by an apparent gap between them and the artists. The managers argued: “... I think *they* (the artists) themselves did not really know what they wanted from us” (ibid., 91, italics in original). So the insecurity was doubled, not only about themselves, but also what was expected of them. This doubled insecurity led to the: “...paradoxical interplay between losing and maintaining control” (2017, 3). As a result the positions on both sides of the bridge remained dominant and this made bridging an empty gesture. Not even a sausage could change that.

This however did not withhold the artists to try new ways of bridging. The most intriguing is that of the ‘Trojan Horse’. This idea seems pretty obvious and involves disguises. It is another way of worming ones way into the world of business, in order to get a better idea of what goes on there. The problem with the Trojan horse however is, that it leaves its position, but keeps it simultaneously. It is an attempt to broaden a similar position and not to expand a ‘horizon’. It is a multiplication of identical space and not treading on ‘new and unexplored’ ground. Or as Anke argues: “...the artists seemed to be unable to leave their artistic identities, fearing the possibility of ending up as a prostitute or jester, or losing their identity altogether” (2017, 135). So this bridging seemed in vain as the common ground is favored over the bridge or the connector.

The result was that the attempts to bridge backfired, meaning that trying to get together and understanding each other leads to contrary effects, and thus more barriers and misconceptions. So the attraction apparently didn’t lead to cooperation, but solidified the position and obstructed the relation.

This becomes even more complex as the bridging doesn’t just go in one direction. It is not just the art world positioning itself towards business, but also towards the art world in itself. This means that there is on the one hand the avant-garde, while on the other hand the business side of art. In the latter the artists assume a position of experts, or autonomous genius, because this apparently appeals to business. The avant-garde on the other hand demands an impression of independence and not ‘selling out’ to business. This paradox even further solidifies the positions on both side of the bridge which makes them almost impossible to leave. It can be considered a breeding ground for bamboozlement in all its glory.

Still in spite of all this positioning deviance occurred by a few artists that resulted in some bridging nevertheless. It resulted in opening up some feelings of anxiety and hatred of ‘being-docile’ from the business side. An employee described: “[t]his routine, every day, week, year after year and back then I

thought “what a life”. (2017, 149). The project for him was a wake-up call. It made him deal with fear and think about escape, because: “[f]ear makes people submit to rigid segmentarity, makes them happily apply dichotomies produced by a binary machine just to flee from flight” (2017, 124) . . . So this being docile or dressage created: “. . . a fear which bordered on paranoia” (2017, 125). So it is this fear and paranoia that can be dismantled by the bridging between art and business.

It is then the subversiveness of the artist that becomes seductive and offers a line of flight, a bridge, a connector, an AND, as: “[i]t is the AND that involutes, that contaminates and generates movement, newness”. (2017, 45). The line of flight becomes a bridge and has the potency to dismantle the positions. It might even make the sausage desirable. This is what I’ve read in the intriguing book by Anke Strauß, and that allowed my thoughts to get carried away and move along a line of flight.

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