

Art mart

John Swinfield on art for money's sake.



The handout says this manual teaches you to 'navigate the art market like a pro'; further proof of art being another market, as in black, slave, cattle or cocaine. Is there an area in the universe in which money hasn't left its taint? Let's further dissect the handout: 'Like a pro'; what's to be made of that? A beady-eyed coterie, scrutinising art like the Dow Jones;

gauging market conditions, poring over margins, calculating percentages. And 'navigate'? Oddly nautical, this: Cap'n Charlie Saatchi, perhaps, on the bridge of the high-risk hulk Contemporary Art? Good speed and God bless all who sail in her. But if you're burning to traverse oceans cashing in on other people's creativity, to be a market pro navigating round profitable installations, then this could be for you.

Gallery owners, dealers, consultants, 'the hottest artists', offer assorted wisdoms. Art is now a lunatic merry-go-round, spinning faster, its riders giddy and breathless; will it career off its axis, scraping shins and egos, or keep whirling, its bare-knuckle fares clinging on, making ever more fatuous products for ever fatter profits? When will anybody ever declare: 'But what about the quality?' instead of 'What's it worth?'

Collecting Contemporary, by Adam Lindemann

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