



## SENSUOUS SOCIETY – BEYOND AN ECONOMIC RATIONALITY

SINCE THE FINANCIAL CRACK IN 2008 THE TIME WE HAVE BEEN LIVING IN HAS BEEN KNOWN AS 'THE CRISIS'. THIS COMMENT EXAMINES THE CRISIS, NOT JUST AS A SLUMP IN THE OUTPUT OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM, BUT RATHER AS A SIGN THAT THE ECONOMIC PARADIGM IS NEARING ITS END AS THE DOMINANT LOGIC OF SOCIETY.

BY GRY WORRE HALLBERG, PERFORMANCE ARTIST AND PARTNER, HOUSE OF FUTURES

Western society has been based on economical imperatives such as optimization and rationality, which leaves no space for more sensuous, inspired and gentle modes of being. These values could very well form an emerging paradigm that I call the 'Sensuous Society'.

Relatively new terms such as work-life balance, corporate social responsibility and triple bottom lines point towards the need for adjustments. Even before the financial crack this was recognized by many agents in the corporate world, but there is a risk that companies clinging to old values will not be able to adapt.

In the sensuous society the general mode of being is defined by the aesthetic dimension, that has exactly the sensuous experience at its core (according to Baumgarten and the aesthetic philosophy following him). That means that the current economic rationality that dominates all spheres of societies today will be replaced. So, it is a very radical idea.

The basic principles of societies have changed several times. As Joseph Campbell points out, one can tell which dimension has dominated at a given time by looking at the tallest building in the city. Up until the Middle Ages – The church (and the basic premises of the religious dimension: to transcend, a relation to a god/the gods, spirituality...), and now (since the industrialization) – The financial centers and the basic premises of the economic dimension: I think most would agree that we are still living in the economic dimension and it determines our fundamental mode of being in the world. But a new time, allowing for

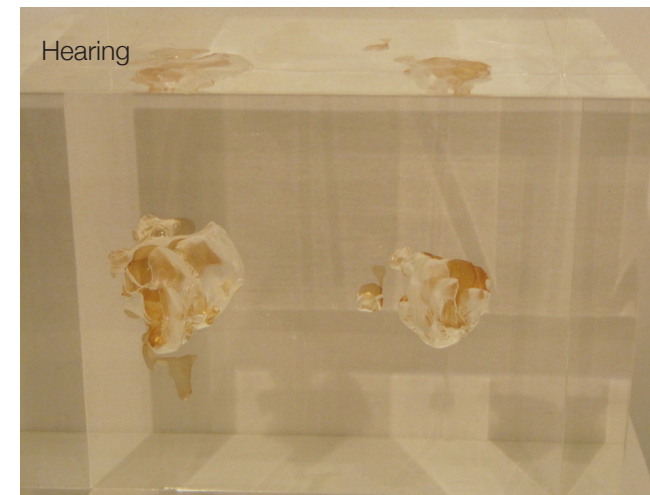
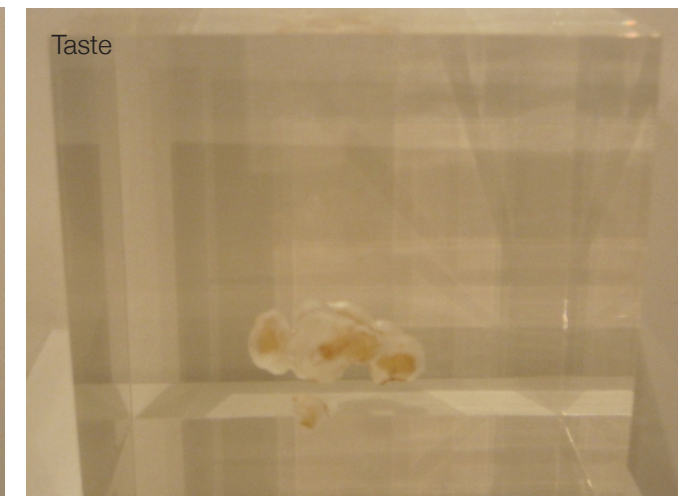
a more sensuous mode of being in the world, seem to approach. Once it's there you must be ready for it!

The notion of a sensuous society furthermore reshapes the role of art and artistic practice. The exclusive autonomous art system is also a result of the dominance of the economic dimension. Within this autonomous zone the art genius is a celebrated figure, which is conceived as someone with a very special (transcending) intelligence.

In a sensuous society however, I believe that this will be a more common intelligence, as for example Joseph Beuys points at – Simply, because we all have this creative potential within us, and if our outset and mode of being in the world is the sensuous, this potential will be released. Of course, there will be some, who are better at navigating in the sensuous society, those with special artistic talents.

We should pay a lot of respect to that craftsmanship and continuously refine it – But much more people than those crystallized as artists today have artistic talent that will be discharged and cultivated in a sensuous society, which it would never have been in the economic. Are you ready for the change?

Gry Worre Hallberg operates in the intersection of performance art, research, activism and future studies. Her aim is to enrich environments with an aesthetic dimension through the use of performance art, universe design and 'fiction pimping'. Gry has a MA in Theatre- and Performance Studies, and is also an Associate at RUC in Performance Design.



**By Annie Cattrell (Scottish)  
SENSE, 2001-2003**

"This sequence of sculptures illustrates the activity patterns of the human brain as it responds to the five senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste. Scans of a subject's brain using each of the senses were produced with functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). These scans were then converted into three-dimensional physical structures of amber resin using a rapid-prototyping process.

WORKING WITH SCIENTISTS: DRs STEVE SMITH, MORTEN KRINGEBACK AND MARK LYTHGOE. SPONSORSHIP: 3DSYSTEMS AND HOBARTS

*Pictures on this page is private photos from the exhibition "Superhuman – exploring human enhancement from 600 BCE to 2050", by Wellcome Collection, London 2012. The text above is from the exhibition, and below is from the exhibition catalogue:*

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