

Johnen Galerie



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At the moment the notion of 'political art' seems to be experiencing increasing relevance, a notion, which in my view is as obsolete as it is tautological. Of course there are artists who are explicitly politically motivated and others who are not. But neither intention changes the fact that artistic production – like all acts – is always political and critical as well as affirmative towards something in being a performative re-affirmation of, or deviation from, certain existing circumstances. My question would rather be what is the specific 'something' a certain work of art is critical towards, what structures is it affirming and what does this position imply politically. Considering my personal point of view, (most) object related work apriori affirms structures that I am politically sceptic of, since it mirrors, is involved in and thus promotes the historically prevalent mode of economic production, the transformation of material.

In this respect I consider communism and capitalism as 2 versions of the same model of economy, which only differ in their ideas about distribution. This model would be: the transformation of material or – to use another word – the transformation of 'nature' into supply goods in order to decrease supply shortage and to diminish the threats of nature, both of course in order to enhance the quality of life. Both the appearance of excess supply in western societies in the 20th century, as well as of mankind's endangering of the specific disposition of 'nature' in which human life seems possible, question the hegemony of this mode of production, in which the objecthood of visual art is profoundly inclined. My point is that dance as well as singing - as traditional artistic media - could be a paradigm for another mode of production which stresses transformation of acts instead of transformation of material, continuous involvement of the present with the past in creating further presents instead of an orientation towards eternity, and simultaneity of production and deproduction instead of economics of growth.

Tino Sehgal