

**EXPERIENCE
ECONOMY
FOR DUMMIES
AND DICTATORS**

***ON DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR
IN VISUAL CULTURE***

***FUCK,
SHIT
AND
DAMN,
CAN ALREADY BE PIMPED BY ADDING AN
EXCLAMATION MARK, LIKE THIS:
FUCK!
SHIT!
AND
DAMN!
AND EVEN MORE BY PUTTING IT IN ITALICS,
LIKE THIS:
FUCK!
SHIT!
AND
*DAMN!»***

by FREEK LOMME

» BUT, 'WHAT THE HELL' DOES THIS BRING ABOUT? THESE ADJUSTMENTS NUANCE THE MEANING OF A PARTICULAR WORD AND ITS WRITTEN EXPRESSION. IT'S A TECHNICAL, A "DESIGNY" ATTRIBUTION. STILL, IT WOULD WORK DIFFERENTLY FOR WORDS LIKE:

**PINEAPPLES!
DESKTOP!
AND
INSTALLING!**

*As I'm currently writing, I can only illustrate this process via the representation of words. Still, this process also takes place within visual culture.

The expression of both our visual and our textual culture are completely subsumed by the economic logic of the experience economy. Excitement and arousal are peer-points within this logic. Neglecting the actual reference of each expression, this logic tends to focus on the 'What the hell!' element. Therefore picking up the sensation rather as the signification of that original visual or verbal statement. As the signification is hardly at stake, the worth of this sensational expression is lost. We only have to open up the most popular newspapers, turn on the TV, walk outside and get confronted with advertisements, gossip with our neighbor to understand this process: inciting commercial excitement and 'a feeling of being' to people.

I don't want to focus on the commercial logic but rather this logic's relation to us as individuals. The excitement and arousal mirrors our daily lives with a form of what "Life" could be; either the dramatic fate of 30 mine workers buried underground in Chili or preposterous when we compare the next phase of a soap opera character's life to our own. This mirror of life is, evidently, hypothetical. Often it's pathetic, as this kind of projection holds little, if any, serious relevance for the moral and social fulfillment of our own development.

I would dare to argue that the logic of these extremes of desire disguises any motivation for taking a practical moral or social stance, as it's basically fiction of a hyper real situation, a story. In sum: the sender of these sensations doesn't take responsibility at the level of sent content. And likewise, the receiver is not expected to be responsible either for relating to the meaning and value of this content.

Beyond experience economy logics into the logics of the megalomaniac.

It's exactly within this domain that Erwin Thomasse reasons. As the experience economy logic is accountable for the silent sensation, a takeover of the passive, we could only argue that the economy of megalomaniacs is the excessively proceeding step.

Thomasse picks up cases of the megalomaniac logic by referring to the insane sensations expressed by megalomaniacs concerning their own lives, with the objective to implement an image of their supremacy. A case of this is the title of his current project '38 under par and 11 holes-in-one', which is both an absurd and truthfully communicated PR stunt of Kim Jong-Il, "chief" of North Korea. It's uncertain how many people believe in the myths revolving around and proposed by this personage.

Thus, when an image is constructed and proposed, it is meant to capture the "hearts and minds" of those addressed. As Thomasse argues: 'when does this stop? Isn't all communication one big pile of trashy asshole profiling: just look at how simple people like Carice van Houten (Dutch Actress doing well), Geert Wilders and all other politicians, art authorities and so on are behaving!' Thomasse indeed raises some relevant questions.

Thomasse then addresses the tensions within this logic by playing open this as a 'system of beliefs', by playing upon the visual absurd and grotesque as a spiritual field of sensations. As our 'beliefs' are either affirmed or mistrusted along the lines of our criticality or distrust, we all attribute different 'systems of beliefs'. No matter what Thomasse attributes, it always revolves around repetition, totems, portrayal and other aspects of staging belief. He stages via experiences, offering sensations and demanding a play of trusting stupidity, as we have to reason with our sensational senses that drive us to insanity...

'We people, who are darker than blue' Curtin Mayfield sang, referring to the status of the 'black' in the U.S. and, furthermore, the way that black people dealt with that status. We like to believe in the dominant images offered by dominant culture portraying cultural and private identity. Still: we're all blue sometimes....