

# Comparablemade

Art / Data. A comparative distinction

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At the turn of the millennium, art theory and the exhibition business were forced to reflect on the subtle differences between artwork and profane things. For example, Boris Groys noted in his "Topology of Art" (2003): "The less the work of art differs visually from a profane thing, the more the clear distinction between the art context and the profane, everyday, extra-museum context of its appearance becomes necessary." (ibid., p. 123) Groys had thus implicitly applied a mutual technique of comparative discrimination and drawn conclusions from their findings.

Today the focus is less on the distinction *art/thing* than on the difference *art/data*. Data are not works of art, but value-forming raw materials of comparative thinking. Without the relevance of evaluated data, even elements of a work of art cannot really be realized today. Data always emerge when information that has been made comparable is related to each other - and thus a new kind of relationship between what has been *made comparable* and what has *become incomparable* emerges. In any case, open connections are created, contextual points at which distinctions become apparent in increasingly complex spaces, which, depending on the goal, orientation and question, allow further aspects to become visible, which in turn generate new distinctions.

Comparison and the effects of its applications associated with this activity have increasingly become a contemporary tool for reflection in the context of art (theory) in recent years. (Cf. for comparison as a paradigm: *Wolfgang Ullrich of the spirit present. Eine Wissenschaftspoetik*, Berlin 2014; *Angelika Epple, Walter Erhart, Ed., Die Welt beobachten: Practices of Comparison*, Frankfurt am Main 2015; *University of Bielefeld: SFB 1288 / Practices of Comparison: <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/sfb1288/>*)

With his *readymades*, Marcel Duchamp shook up the certainties of the art world of the time from 1911 onwards - an attempt to make an idea of non-art

conceivable in addition to the long established art. Today, due to advanced technical possibilities and reflective techniques, we are able to create similarly sophisticated art worlds, which are not only born in the unimaginative space of the theoretical, but in the exclusive space of the (in)comparable: In the literal sense of the word, these are *comparablemades*.

Anyone who constructs a particular moment of representation - for example, the encounter with a still unknown work - artificially, i.e., retroactively, is at the same time asking about the internal contradictions that make this possible in the first place. If, for example, an exclusive moment of art were to arise in a comparison with something else, namely incomparable, one could, as it were, think after the effect of this paradox. At the same time it is bound to a material or immaterial work by challenging the intelligence of its users.

Works of art are particularly characterized by the fact that they combine an inherently contradictory logic (conceivable, for example, is the difference between art and comparison) with a form of applied intelligence, in this case: a current solution in the form of a textual representation.

By realizing as a producer that art generates incomparable, albeit paradoxical experiences, the user as a producer reflects at the same time on conditions that make it possible to artificially generate these experiences again, but now in an expanded form: as if we were catching a direct glimpse into the DNA of art, it is now possible to create formats of art solely through unexpected comparisons that suggest more possibilities than their then realized connections make visible. It is not without reason that the comparability of art/consumption has been played out in recent years both in terms of art theory and the aesthetics of consumption. A similar future is soon to come for the distinction between altered art experiences and evaluable data material. In the same way that new usable patterns can be read out of the abundance of existing data today, it is now possible to present the conditions of the possibilities under which new formats of art could emerge with the newly emerging techniques of linking different traditions and formats in their simultaneity.

What never existed - at least in this perspective - and will not exist in the future: the image of a self-contained, identical form of art, but always only a form already communicating with an external dimension, in which currently

changed formats of new connections between art and certain applications are played out.

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