

The joke and its relationship to the improbable

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One of the best-known rhetorical formulas that one hears again and again when dealing with contemporary art is following: This or that art-work *undermines the expectations that society places on art*. One expectation of art, for example, is that its form expresses a certain degree of improbability. On the other hand, it is in the museum or in a current exhibition, a place of education and knowledge about the peculiarities of art, that the improbability of art is transformed into the probability of communication.

In other words, where the artist tries to bring the impossible and the improbable into the world or to express it, the art mediators basically try the opposite: the more the artist strives for a form of improbability, the less the art mediators are able to define the rules with which the expectation of something improbable could succeed. Instead of rules with which a work of art operates, in modernism a smart joke, a subtle minimal gesture with which an artist simply invalidates a rule and realizes something else, a new idea, another gesture, an expanded setting, which does not repeat the past, but defines everything as changeable.

What you can't count or don't know you can turn into pictures. These, in turn, can make something unlikely more likely. Dealing with art would thus be an applied form of semantic statistics. Something succeeds and is communicated as a form(ular) of art; much that does not succeed can also be used - also in the art context. In the context of art, success means that something new succeeds that is not yet known but can already be roughly calculated or staged. The joke in the context of art is that one can apparently combine reference values with one another here, which are precisely because they demonstrate their suitability for power here. On the one hand, improbability is a starting point, but on the other hand it is also a contradiction that seems so contradictory that it will be transformed into something strikingly new, something that is becoming more probable.

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