

Title: **Encountering the Unintentional**

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## *Abstract*

In recent times, we have seen a greater interest in the Printmaking process, and changes in its exhibition process by the inclusion of Printmaking matrices. Printmaking matrices are means for visual reproduction. Although all matrices are equal in regard to their purpose, they are assessed according to different standards within the realm of the artworld. This paper will especially focus on the difference in perception in regard to the artistic merit of the woodcut block in comparison to the used silkscreen. Gavin Turk's artwork series and Níall McClelland's Exhibition 'Hot Sauce' illustrate two different approaches to the silkscreen. I argue that the woodcut block is rewarded artistic merit on basis of secondary associations concerning its materiality. On the contrary, the used silkscreen is unrecognized as an artwork due its classification as an unintentional residue-object. I will show that the artist's aspiration for absolute control and calculation in the creative process determines the assessment of the silkscreen as an artwork of its own right.

## *Title: Encountering the Unintentional*

### *Introduction*

It has been already ten years since I started making silkscreen prints. Over such a long time, my movements became a matter of routine. Create an image, expose it into a previously coated screen, print the image, de-coat the screen and reuse it if possible. And if not, remove the mesh of the screen, discard and substitute it with a new one. After such a long time, one starts doing it without thinking too much. The actions are automatic. The artist becomes “machine-like” in regard to the execution of the creative process. Input, execution, output. The artist's intention is the creative input, while the artwork is the output of the artistic process. The artwork is the artist's goal. Along the way to the artist's intended artwork though, by-products are being accumulated. Those by-products are often regarded to be nothing more than the mere residue left over in the creation process. Printmaking matrices too, can be regarded to be by-products created in the printmaking process. However, it appears that not all printmaking matrices are treated alike in the realm of the artworld.

Two years ago, I participated in a group exhibition. Among the exhibiting artists was the Chinese artist Yin Hai Jun, who exhibited his print artwork as well as a large-scale carved wood block. The woodcut block was the printmaking matrix he used for one of his previous prints. It was framed and exhibited. A similar exhibition strategy was underlining Jo Hyang Sook's Solo Exhibition later that year. The artist exhibited several carved woodcut blocks in a separate exhibition room along with the artist's print artwork. Other contemporary exhibition strategies show a similar approach towards the woodcut block. Based on such exhibition strategies one can say that the woodcut block seems to be acknowledged as an artwork in its own right.

It is striking to see that used silkscreens are by comparison far less being exhibited than woodcut blocks. Those, which are indeed exhibited within the framework of a gallery or museum, are exhibited in regard to other aspects and differ in their assessments in comparison to the woodcut block. During the Jincheon's Printed Landscape Exhibition in 2017, the participating artists were asked to exhibit not only their finished artwork, but the printmaking matrices as well. The curator asked for the printmaking matrices to be exhibited in order for the viewer to get a hint at the creation process. The printmaking process, which is usually hidden from the viewer, should be made accessible through the exhibition of the printmaking matrices. By doing so the curator intended to explain the printmaking process to the viewer and further foster his/her interest in printmaking. Even though some artist refused to exhibit their printmaking matrices, there were some artists, who indeed exhibited them. The exhibited matrices were silkscreen related drawings on transparent acetate.<sup>1</sup> Both, the actual artwork as well as the acetate drawings were exhibited side by side.

It is important to note here that, although the silkscreen acetate objects were put into the formal

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<sup>1</sup> Here I mean drawings made on clear acetate sheets ready to be exposed onto a coated screen.

framework of the art world, they were not recognized as autonomous artworks. They were exhibited as a depiction of one particular stage in the creation process. In other words, they were not artworks but mere visual explanations of said process. In this paper I want to investigate why some printmaking matrices are regarded as autonomous artworks while others are just being considered to be by-products of the creative process. I believe it is due to the artist's reluctance to encounter the artwork and its process that puts the used silkscreen mesh in the rubbish bin instead of the gallery. I illustrate my argument by investigating the exhibition practices of the artists Gavin Turk and Níall McClelland, who displayed the silkscreen frame as part of an exhibition.

### *An Attempt At Expressing The "Inexpressible"*

Pain. Having a headache, falling of the chair or cutting one's finger while cooking. Pain can take on a variety of forms. In most cases however, pain is associated with some kind of wound, which was inflicted on the physical body. The pain's source is a visible or non-visible wound that causes physical discomfort. One contorts one's face, cries out or convulses in pain. Pain is sometimes noticeable to the degree that it gets difficult to hide. It becomes tangible through the body, which suffers it. Through the body one encounters and gets confronted by pain. One might be able to experience a body in pain, but one is not able to touch the pain directly. So even though, pain might be encounter-able, it is not experience-able in the literal sense. The pain gets "experience-able" to the degree one encounters the body. To put it differently, one does not experience the other's pain directly. One is only able to experience the other's body in pain. It is a secondary pain experience, which concludes in a secondary victimization.

Are therefore, expressions of empathy like "I feel you" or "I feel your pain" nothing more than mere empty words? At first glance it might appear to be the case. How is possible to feel the other's pain if one does not experience it first-hand? Although the pain of the other might not be directly experience-able, one's empathetic capacity allows one to feel sympathetic to the other and

share his/her pain to a certain degree.<sup>2</sup> Empathy is an ability to feel with and understand the victim without becoming part of the victim's experience. One is experiencing the trauma or wound from the position of an observer. However, since one is a mere observer, one is unable to exactly know the victim's feelings.<sup>3</sup>

A recent study on the Expression of Trauma in the Woodcut of German Expressionism (2015) by Young-kil Yim and Si-eun Lee, claims that one finds traces of the artist's trauma not only inside his/her artwork, but furthermore in the wood cut block itself. The traumatic event of the wound is piercing the skin of the artist much like the artist him/herself is cutting his image into the wood block. The researchers compare the artist's penetration of the wood block surface to the piercing sensation caused by a traumatic event.<sup>4</sup> With each cut the artist relieves his/ her traumatic experience and inscribes its visualization into the surface of the wood block.<sup>5</sup>

According to a recent study on emotional residue, the physical space between the subject and the other can be interpreted as serving the role of an intermediary.<sup>6</sup> The researchers claim that the physical space fosters the transmission of “nonvisual, nonauditory emotional signals” emitted by the other. Those emissions can be sensed by the subject even after a course of time.<sup>7</sup> The other emits his/her emotional sweat into the space, where the subject encounters and absorb it like a sponge. This in turn affects the emotional state of the subject. The researchers though noted that such an emotion transmission process is intuitive.<sup>8</sup> This means that the emotional residue transmission proceeds

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<sup>2</sup> Ioannidou, F., Konstantikaki, V. (2008) Empathy and emotional intelligence: What is it really about? p.119

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.119

<sup>4</sup> Yim, Y., Lee, S. (2015) A Study on the Expression of Trauma in the Woodcut of German Expressionism, p. 156/157

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 158

<sup>6</sup> Savani, K., Kumar, S., Naidu, N. V. R. & Dweck, C. S. (2011) Beliefs About Emotional Residue p.685

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.699

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.685

mostly unconsciously and unreflective. In other words, the emotional residue transmission is based on emotional affect.

Based on the emotional residue transmission theory, it could be argued that the wood block functions as the intermediary which transmits the artist's traumatic experience to the viewer. This though would implicate that the artist's subjective traumatic experience is embodied within the wood block. Michael Richardson argues that a human being has the strong need to identify oneself with the other.<sup>9</sup> One wants to experience what the other feels. But how does one want to experience someone's trauma when trauma by definition exceeds the limits of representation and explanation?<sup>10</sup> According to Jill Bennett, the problem is not the attempt at the representation of trauma, but the subsequent symptomatic reading of a subjective trauma into a single object.<sup>11</sup> She notes that the force of trauma and the affect, which it entails, resides in the space between. Seeing trauma being embodied in a single object fosters an affective feeling of empathy, which is purely based on a sense of mimicry.<sup>12</sup> This leads to an unmediated overidentification with the victim of the trauma.<sup>13</sup> I further argue that such an overidentification fosters numbness and insensitivity towards the other's trauma and pain. Therefore, according to Bennett, a reading of the artist's subjective trauma within the frame of the woodblock hampers a mediated encounter with trauma in the lived space.

As if being carved into stone, the “wound” does not completely fade away. It stays for everyone to see. This is what Yim and Lee called the “memory of the wound,” which is enshrined in the wood block. They claim that the memory of the artist's original wound or traumatic experience can be found inside the wood block as well as inside the image printed from it.<sup>14</sup> The wood block remembers what the artist remembers. It is the artist, who forces the wood block to remember by forcing his/her memory into it's surface.

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<sup>9</sup> Richardson, M. (2001) *Experience Culture*, p.59

<sup>10</sup> Bennett, J. (2005) *Empathic Vision – Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, p.14

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21

<sup>14</sup> Yim & Lee, *op. cit.* , p. 158

To quote the Swiss psychologist Edouard Claparede (1911, cited in Bennett, 2005, p. 22) “It is impossible to feel emotion as past”. One only feels a specific emotion in the moment of its experience in the present. The memory of emotions and feelings one experienced in the past on the other hand, becomes a mental representation.<sup>15</sup> To borrow Bennett's words, one “thinks the emotion one once felt”<sup>16</sup>. Hannah Arendt stated that the action of thinking strips the experience of its emotional affect. By thinking emotions one “de-senses” them<sup>17</sup>. In the form of mental representation, memories are processed, articulated, interpreted and eventually revived in the form of new experiences. Trauma, though, due to its unrepresentability resists cognitive processing<sup>18</sup> To put it differently, trauma cannot be thought of much less remembered in the literal sense.

Getting hold of an idealistic concept like pain or trauma and its memory, plays out in the mind of the person, who had the traumatic experience.<sup>19</sup> It does not exist outside the subject. Hence, claiming that the artist's memory of a traumatic experience exists inside his/her artwork or within the medium he/she used to create it, would imply that precisely that wound or trauma becomes tangible through the visual process. More than the actual memory or the artist's trauma, I argue that an anchor, which connects the trauma with the present, is embedded inside the wood block through which it gets reproduced. This anchor is not a visual, but a sense-affective trace, which connects one's present and past selves. It is through this connection that one is able to critically mediate trauma.

Traces may or may not trigger the artist's intended reaction of the viewer, who is looking at the artwork. This is because one does not have, according to Paul Bloom, the “psychic access to the intentions of other.”<sup>20</sup> Triggers are attached to specific memories. Yet, since the concept of memory

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<sup>15</sup> Bennett, op. cit, p.22

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Arendt, H. (1981) *The Life of the Mind*, pp.76/77

<sup>18</sup> Bennett, op.cit., p.23

<sup>19</sup> Bennett, op. cit., p.11

<sup>20</sup> Bloom, P. (1996) *Intention, history, and artifacts concepts.*, p.7

in most cases is highly individual,<sup>21</sup> those traces will never trigger the artist's individual memory alone. What I mean is, that a trace can point to different individual memories at the same time. It might point back to the memory of the traumatic experience or wound of the artist. On other hand, they might be interpreted on the basis of the individual memory and experience of the viewer.

The artist's anchor is one particular vessel for the visualization of an individual experience at a specific moment in time, which is later interpreted by another individual – the viewer. In other words, it embodies a connection the artist himself/herself alone can call a wound or trauma. The comments, interpretations and points of critique made by curators, collectors or the ordinary public is a result of their own believes and ideals.<sup>22</sup>

### *Damage In order To Create*

The silkscreen mesh is, like the wood block mentioned in the previous section, one particular matrix that recreates the artist's image. Printmaking matrices resemble to some degree templates that temporarily hold various parts of the image. In other words, the silkscreen mesh and the woodblock are media used for the visual reproduction of the artist's image. Yet, there is a possibility for wood cut blocks to obtain the rank of an artwork. Though both matrices are the means for reproduction, recent exhibition strategies show a difference in the perception as to what can be regarded an artwork. According to those exhibition strategies, the woodcut block is displayed as an artwork in its own right, while the silkscreen mesh is often considered mere garbage by the curators of the exhibitions and by the artist himself. In this section, I intend to show that the artist's/viewer's imagined association leads to a difference in perception and consequently a different assessment of the printmaking matrix. Furthermore, I would like to explore the difference in perception between the woodblock and the silkscreen mesh by illustrating different exhibition strategies.

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<sup>21</sup> Kosuth, J. (1991). *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990.*, p.20

<sup>22</sup> Danto, A. C. (2000) *Art and Meaning*. In Carroll, N. (Ed.), *Theories of Art Today*, p.133

The wood cut block as well as the silkscreen are both printmaking matrices intended for the visual reproduction of the artist's artwork. Although both matrices have the same purpose, they obviously differ in their materiality. Wood cut blocks are made out of different types of wood. The woodcut block yield different effects according to the type of wood used. While soft woods like e.g. cedar and certain types of pine are unable to reproduce fine details, they still create unique effects.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, hard wood like e.g. cherry or basswood, which is widely used for woodcuts, is more able to reproduce reliable results. Furthermore, fine details are more easily rendered.<sup>24</sup>

The silkscreen consists of a piece of fabric, which is stretched over a wooden or metal frame. Metal frames are in more frequent use by professional artists due to their stability and weight. Wooden frames are heavier and at risk of deformation due to the excessive use of water during the silkscreen printing process. And the cheap price of the wooden frame makes it more attractive to art students. In this paper I will focus on the metal framed silkscreens, since those are in more constant use in a professional environment.

Although the wood block is not a living entity anymore, it is still considered a natural material, or a material of natural origin. The wood cut block, though just a mere part of the actual tree, exhibits the growing cycles of it's original source.<sup>25</sup> In comparison, the silkscreen mesh is, in contrary to its name, not made out of silk anymore. The types of mesh material currently in frequent use are made out of polyester.<sup>26</sup> To put it differently, contrary to the woodcut block the mesh material is not of natural origin. Before the introduction of polyester mesh material in 1940, the silkscreen mesh was indeed made out of silk.<sup>27</sup> Silk however, was expensive and could not be sufficiently handled during long printing runs.<sup>28</sup> There was a time before silk became the popular mesh material, that the Japanese

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<sup>23</sup> Walker, G. (2010) *The Woodcut Artist's Handbook: Techniques and Tools for Relief Printmaking* (2nd ed.), p.20

<sup>24</sup> Walker, op. cit., p.23

<sup>25</sup> Yim & Lee, op. cit., p. 160

<sup>26</sup> Adam, R., Robertson, C. (2003) *Screenprinting – The complete water-based System*, p. 67

<sup>27</sup> *History of Screen Printing* (n.d.).

<sup>28</sup> Adam & Robertson, op. cit., p. 66

used fine strings of human hair to keep the cut out stencils in place.<sup>29</sup> Both – the silk mesh and the earlier Japanese prototype – exhibit naturalistic properties that resemble to a certain degree the materiality of wood cut blocks. Silk is a natural material much like the wood block. It is made out of woven protein fibers, which are obtained by processing the cocoons of certain larvae.<sup>30</sup> The Japanese silkscreen prototype on the other hand, though not entirely natural, possesses certain naturalistic characteristics through its application of human hair.

Even though such natural material has been cut off of its origins, it is still “connected” to it through the association with its source of life. It is this associated connection which lets printmaking matrices of a natural origin exhibit a different sensibility than entirely artificial matrices. This connection though is based on the viewer's imagination. To put it differently, one is imagining the connection. This means though, that the connection as such is not present in the tangible world. It manifests itself, according to Arendt, in the form of a 'mental re-presentation', which is unique to the individual.<sup>31</sup> It is through such a mental re-presentation, that one is making the absent present. To sum it up, it is precisely the viewer who infuses the printmaking matrix with the otherwise “absent” additional meaning – may it be physical traits like material sensibility or idealistic concepts.

#### *Gavin Turk*

There are some cases in which silkscreens were exhibited as part of a formal exhibition. The most noteworthy example of such a case is Gavin Turk's artwork. The British artist, who is most famous for his sculptures, also produces Andy-Warhol style prints.<sup>32</sup> He does not only use Warhol's visual style to create his images, but furthermore prints them in silkscreen. By doing so he intends to question the authenticity of the original in times of visual ubiquity.<sup>33</sup> Apart from mainly creating sculptures, drawings and prints, he also made a series of what I would call “silkscreen mesh artworks”.

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<sup>29</sup> Biegeleisen, J.I. (1963) *The Complete Book of Silk Screen Printing Production* p. 2

<sup>30</sup> Vollrath, F. & Knight, D (2005) *Biology and Technology of Silk Production*, p.3

<sup>31</sup> Arendt, op. cit., p.76

<sup>32</sup> Deckker, R. (2013) *Gavin Turk on What Printmaking Means to an Artist*.

<sup>33</sup> Hopper, J. (2013) *Gavin Turk by Justin Hopper – Gavin Turk on impersonating Elvis, Ford transit vans, and the problems of careful consumption*.

Those “silkscreen mesh artworks” were produced over several years. The series, which Turk started in 2007, comprise now, as of 2018, nine “artworks”.<sup>34</sup>



fig. 1. Faded Glory (2007) Faded screen ink, silkscreen & aluminium, 200x140 cm



fig. 2. Fright Wig Screen Ripped (2011) Silk screen in perspex box, 796 x 796 x 100 mm

The first artwork of the series is called <Faded Glory> (2007) (see fig. 1). It is made of a partially washed out image on a used silkscreen. The residue image itself depicts the portrait of Turk as Elvis. The image on the screen is partly faded.<sup>35</sup> Turk intended to highlight the process that eventually leads to the creation of an artwork. This depiction of the image-making-process was then intentionally represented in a gallery. I want to emphasize that even though it was “represented as a finished” artwork, it is nevertheless, not regarded as an autonomous artwork by the artist himself. According to the description on the artists's website, the piece is constantly described as a “byproduct” or “residue”.<sup>36</sup> The labels “leftover” or byproduct implies though, that the “artwork” was not intentionally created. It is an outcome of a process, which exceeds the artist's intentions.

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<sup>34</sup> Gavinturk.com (n.d.) Gavin Turk Artworks - Image

<sup>35</sup> Schachl, S. (2008) Gavin Turk – Burnt Out.

<sup>36</sup> Turk, G. (2007) *Faded Glory* [Faded screen ink, silkscreen & aluminium]

The printmaking process, which usually is not the center of the artist's attention, is given the spotlight in the artwork. However, Turk's artwork is not depicting the entire printmaking process starting from the creation of the drawing to the finished print artwork. Turk's "silkscreen mesh artwork" visualizes the final stage in the life of the silkscreen. The incorporation of faded ink in the art object indicates that the silkscreen most likely cannot be re-used for further printing.<sup>37</sup> It is impossible to remove ink once it has dried in the mesh of the screen. The only solution would be for the mesh to be removed, discarded and replaced.

<Fright Wig Screen Ripped> (see fig. 2) is the most recent addition to the series. It shows an evolution from previous pieces of the series. It is here that the artist for the first time framed one of his pieces. <Fright Wig Screen Ripped> is a used silkscreen, which was put into an acrylic box.<sup>38</sup> The frame prevents the art object from being touched. It generates a barrier between the art object and the viewer. This barrier prevents the viewer from physically interacting with the art object. Consequently, the viewer gets assigned the role of the observer. On the other hand, the frame protects the art object's sanctity and elevates it to the rank of an artwork. The frame increases the perceived value of the art object.

Gavin Turk's artwork series discussed above shows that silkscreen frames are indeed exhibited within the framework of the artworld. Nevertheless, they are still not regarded to be intentional artworks in their own right by constantly being referred to as residues and left-overs. Furthermore, calling the piece a visualization of the printmaking process implies that it is running short of being acknowledged as an artwork of its own right – even by the artist himself. On the one hand, it is part of Turk's process to question the viewer's perception of art and reveal new alternatives of seeing.<sup>39</sup> Though, on the other hand he stops one step short of breaking out of the artwork-stereotype. The question therefore now is, is Turk's "silkscreen mesh art object" a mere documentation of the

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<sup>37</sup> Turk, G. (2009) *Fright Che* [Faded screen ink, silkscreen & aluminium]

<sup>38</sup> Turk, G. (2011) *Fright Wig Screen Ripped* [Silk screen in perspex box]

<sup>39</sup> Hopper, op. cit

mechanical printing process as regarded by the artist himself? Or, do the formal properties associated with the framework of the artworld e.g. frame, exhibition etc. turn it automatically into an artwork in its own right?

### *Níall McClelland*

Níall McClelland is a young contemporary Canadian artist based in Toronto, Canada. He puts emphasis on randomness and chance while creating his artwork. Like in the installation piece <Never had the Height>, which he created in 2015, many pieces consist of found objects. Or are, like the piece <Stains Winter 04>, where he folded a large sheet of paper around leaking photocopy ink cartridges, outcome to chance transcending the influence of the artist.<sup>40</sup> In the manner of aleatoric art e.g. Dada, happenings, McClelland instrumentalizes chance in his artistic practice. Chance adds to and consequently synchronize with the artwork's underlining plan.<sup>41</sup> To put it differently, the development and outcome of an artwork is still governed by the artist's intentions while it contains accidental details.

In this section, though, I would like to pay special attention to his use of used silkscreen within his body of work. The piece titled <Teenage Poetry> (see fig. 3) consists of patches of photo sensitive emulsion on four large-scale stretched aluminium silkscreen frames. It depicts abstract shapes of various sizes. Although the shapes appear to have been arranged on the screen on purely formalist grounds, this artwork is based on dismembered lyrics from an Rancid album.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Turner, L. review of McClelland, N. Highest Prices Paid for Gold (2011) [Exhibition]

<sup>41</sup> Bertinetto, A. (2013) On Artistic Luck., p.133

<sup>42</sup> Whyte, M. (2015) Níall McClelland content to just see what happens.



fig. 3. Teenage Poetry (2014) Silkscreen mesh, photo emulsion, aluminum  
152,4x609,6cm

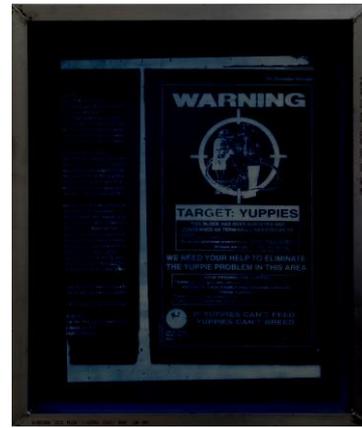


fig 4. A.S.S.S.M.T.T – No More Prisons (2015)  
silkscreen mesh, photo emulsion, aluminum frame  
39x32inch

A year later in 2015 McClelland produced the <A.S.S.S.M.T.T series> (see fig. 4). This series contains ten coated aluminium silkscreens measuring 39 by 32 inches. The exposed images on the screens range from Kurt Cobain's handwritten suicide note over famous cartoon drawings to reproductions of the flyer taken from the book 'No more Prisoners' by William Upski Wimsat. While some of the images the artist used in this series inhabit a deeper meaning, other images are based on randomly found objects.

At this point, I want to emphasize that the artist purposely did not print the exposed images on the screen.<sup>43</sup> The same seems to be applicable to the previous artwork <Teenage Poetry>. The screens in both series are not tainted with left-over ink. Yet, they are sufficiently prepared for one to immediately print the images. The silkscreens are installed with the mesh attached to the wall. All one would need is a squeeze and some ink. However, by not printing the image and exhibiting the silkscreen in a “pre-print” stage, McClelland creates a tension between what could be and what is present. The silkscreen could be a mere mean of reproduction but here, in contrast to Turk's artwork discussed earlier, it is the goal of the artist's intentional actions – the artwork. McClelland turns the unintentional by-product – the silkscreen – into an intentional artwork. The influence of the artist's

<sup>43</sup> Wynia, A. (2015) Níall McClelland Q&A: Hot Sauce.

intentionality will be further discussed in the following section.

### *Making The Unintentional Intentional*

Anything, which is intentionally made to serve a certain purpose, is generally considered an artifact.<sup>44</sup> With this being said, an artwork, too, can be regarded an artifact. The artwork has to serve according to Risto Hilpinen the purpose of being art.<sup>45</sup> To put it differently, the artwork has to fulfill the inherent intentions connected to the concept of art. However, during the creation process of the intended artifact, one naturally ends up with “unintended by-products”.<sup>46</sup> Such “unintended by-products” are precisely that: by-products. They are e.g. the left over paint on the palette or the scraps of paper after having cut out a paper heart.

According to Hilpinen the distinction between purposefully made “actual artifacts” and their mere “residue” is clear. The so-called “residue”, even though made by someone, lacks an actual purpose.<sup>47</sup> It does not have a reason to exist. Applying this to the case of the silkscreen and the residue of the image left of it, it is fairly reasonable for the artist to discard it after the print run. It was created for the “purpose” of creating the image, but since the artwork was completed, it is not needed anymore. It served its purpose. This applies to the other printmaking matrices as well. Seen from this perspective, there is no reason to regard the wood cut block as having more value in the exhibition and curatorial process than the silkscreen or any other printmaking matrix for that matter. Still, the woodcut block seems to be accessed by different standards.

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<sup>44</sup> Kosuth, op.cit., p.20

<sup>45</sup> Hilpinen, R. (2011). Artifact. In Zalta, E.N. (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



fig. 5. Berndnaut Smilde, *Nimbus Powerstation* 2017



fig. 6 Gianni Motti, *Magic Ink* (1989) ink on paper,  
29,7 x 21 cm

One reason for this difference in assessment standards could be question of visibility. The marks left on the wood block are visible, while the ones on a used silkscreen mesh are sometimes barely recognizable at all. This though, is a purely conceptual question, which should not be worth arguing in the current century. We live in a century, which has seen immaterial art having been made and exhibited. Berndnaut Smilde's <Nimbus> (see fig. 5), for example is a cloud-sculpture, which floats in the air for several seconds before it disappears into nothing.<sup>48</sup> Some years ago the Hayward Gallery in London showed the first invisible art show<sup>49</sup>. It exhibited various invisible artworks by different artists. Those artworks, which were created since the 1950s, tried to challenge the viewer's persistent dependence on perceivable visibility when it comes to visual art. One of the exhibited artwork was Gianni Motti's <Magic Ink> (see fig. 6) (1989). It depicts or “does not depict” a drawing made with invisible ink, which was momentarily visible before it disappeared.<sup>50</sup> Said artworks question one's dependence on visibility as a classification criteria for art. Thus, it challenges the assumption that the visibility of the marks on the wood block make the wood block artistically superior to the used silkscreen.

What kind of art the artist creates is ultimately entirely subject to his/her conception and

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<sup>48</sup> Slobing, Z. (2015) How this Artist makes perfect clouds indoors.

<sup>49</sup> Brown, M. (2012) Hayward gallery's invisible show: 'the best exhibition you'll never see'.

<sup>50</sup> Motti, G. (1989) *Magic Ink* [Ink on paper].

intentions. It is up to the artist to decide what kind of art form fits his/her concept or idea the most. He/ she can turn anything into an artwork if he/she wants. The moment he/she calls it art, it is art.<sup>51</sup> This is the crucial point in this argument. The artist has the power to turn even a found object e.g. drift wood into an artwork by placing it in the context of the artworld. By doing so the artist turns the found object in what George Dickie call “an artifact within the artworld”.<sup>52</sup> The found object is, like the by-product discussed earlier, exceeding the intentions of the artists. Why however, does the artist have objections to treat the used silkscreen the same way he/she treats the found object?

### *Conclusion*

Some time ago, I accidentally came across some used silkscreen frames at a dumping ground. Apart from the mesh being ripped, the frames were unimpaired. All I had to do was to change the mesh in order to re-use them for printing. The four large-scale aluminum frames that someone had thrown away are now being used in my studio. The moment I found those screens, I thought myself lucky. Instead of paying a lot of money for the actual frames, I just paid a comparatively trivial amount to substitute the ripped mesh. To put it differently, I got tools for half of the price.

Much like the found object, finding those frames was a chance encounter. According to Alessandro Bertinetto, a lucky encounter is something one can neither program nor foresee.<sup>53</sup> It is beyond one's control and transcends one's intentions. Therefore, one can say that finding those screens was fruit to fateful luck. By taking them in and re-using them, I re-introduced them to the framework of the artworld. However, in contrary to the Dickie's “artifact within the artworld”, I did not re-insert the frames with the purpose of being art. Rather, I re-integrated the frames as tools to be used for the creative process. I treated them as useful objects.

The British sculptor Anish Kapoor once said “ We live (...) in a world of objects.”<sup>54</sup> We use, make and most importantly target objects. An object has a defined outline, which makes it tangible,

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<sup>51</sup> Kosuth, op. cit., p.17

<sup>52</sup> Dickie, G. (1983) *The New Institutional Theory of Art*. In Lamarque, P. & Olsen, S. H. (Eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art – The Analytic Tradition: An Anthology*, p. 49

<sup>53</sup> Bertinetto, op. cit., p. 122

<sup>54</sup> CNN Talk Asia (2012) *Talk with Sculptor Anish Kapoor Transcript*.

experienceable and consequently also understandable. Every object is a self-contained entity. It exists by and in itself. Being detached from the surrounding space, though, forecloses the chance of the object's encounter. The object becomes static and controllable. One can load it with meaning and definitions according to one's beliefs. A sense of control distinguishes the artist's approach to the found object from the one to the used silkscreen. It is also the underlining difference between Turk's approach to the silkscreen and McClelland's.

Artistic creativity is as much a result of the artist's intentional action and decisions as it is the outcome of unexpected occurrences during the production process.<sup>55</sup> Bertinetto argues, that the value of an artwork therefore depends on the artist's conscious engagement with the material as well as the influence of forces, which transcend the artist's intentions. The outcome of such objective forces is subject to 'artistic luck' and chance.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, he notices that pure luck and uncontrollability as well as absolute calculation on the part of the artist preclude artistic merit.<sup>57</sup> This means that the interplay between the artist's controlled engagement and chance are a necessary component for artistic creativity and merit.

Turk and McClelland show different exhibition strategies in regard to the used silkscreen. Turk's art objects, on the one hand, are constantly described as a visualization of the creation process. They are not artworks in their own right, but rather tool-objects. On the other hand, McClelland actively embraces chance as a necessary component in his art. His work de-emphasizes the importance of the artist's control over chance and artistic luck. Both forces - the artist's subjective calculation and the transcendental forces of chance - are being given merit. Therefore, based on Bertinetto's notion on artistic creativity, it is McClelland's incorporation of chance into the creative process, which lets his silkscreen art objects reach the status of artworks in their own right.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 121

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 124

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.136

What is therefore, the reason why used silkscreens are being constantly unrecognized as works of art in comparison to the woodcut block? The problem is not that the silkscreen is lacking any mystical connection to the artist's traumatic experience by exhibiting visual signs of it. It is rather due the artist's aspiration for absolute calculation and control that precludes the used silkscreen of being recognized as an artwork. The artist's inability to embrace chance as a necessary factor in the creative pursuit lets the silkscreen become an eternal tool-object. Furthermore, the artists seems to lack the intention to encounter the used silkscreen as something more than a mere tool. Assessing the silkscreen as an object hampers the possibility to experience the "silkscreen-space". The actual silkscreen-object constitutes merely one part of said space. Consequently, since the artists is assessing the silkscreen as a self-contained object, it leads to the silkscreen being recognized as a tool and not as an artwork.

In short, the artist's strive for absolute control is not beneficial for the artwork. The artist has to consent to give up absolute control over the artwork and its process. This means, that he/she has to be inclined to incorporate the objective force of chance into the creative process. Furthermore, the artist has to be open to the encounter with the "silkscreen space" instead of being fixated on the silkscreen as an object. This however would require the artist to change his/her approach to art in general and his/her "god-like" status as an artist in particular. The artist has to be able to influence chance and be influenced by it. Once he/she is able to do that, he/she can turn the unintentional silkscreen into an intentional artwork.

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### Image List

- Figure 1. Turk, Gavin. Faded Glory. 2007. Faded screen ink, silkscreen & aluminium, 200x140 cm. Photo owned by Gavin Turk.  
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