Warhol, Hirst and Branding

Andy Warhol, Campbell's Soup Cans, 1962, MoMA


Today is Wednesday, January 11th, and we're studying the phenomenon of branding through some of the most famous artists of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Andy Warhol's Factory model of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s now has its counterpart in the work of Damien Hirst, Jeff, Koons and Takashi Murakami.

Of course, centuries earlier, painters such as Velasquez adopted factory models as well, hiring painters to work on his large scale history paintings.

Read Don Thompson's chapters on Hirst, Warhol and Koons as well as Sarah Thornton's chapter on Murakami to get a sense of how today's artists are exploiting the so-called factory model. Choose one of these factory-style artists and comment on their particular marketing strategies and market appeal.

Robert Hughes's comments on Hirst may come back into play as you consider the slipping market share of this once coveted trend-setter. We will examine Hirst's Beautiful Inside My Head Forever auction (Christie's, London, 2008) as an in depth case study in the last week of the course. Provide links to articles, interviews with artists, and/or examples of particular factory produced works to support your post.

Readings

Don Thompson: ARTH 4696 FINLEY Damien Hirst and the Shark THOMPSON.pdf
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Individual Contributions
Charles Saunders

The factory style of artists like Damian Hirst represent a colossal break from traditional approaches to art production and consumption. The combination of brand management and a market-oriented focus effectively replaces inherent subjective value of art, its appreciation and aesthetic quality as a driver of value, and even the artistic ability and skill required in its production with a focus on brand, manipulation of buyer's preferences and demand, and influencing the art market itself through commercial ability. Hirst could be considered one of the most market-savvy artists of all time, as there is arguable little correlation with the quality of his work and the astronomical prices he regularly commands. In fact, often Hirst has little, if any, involvement in the actual production of his art. He employs an army of "assistants" who utilize Hirst's easily replicated framework to create many iterations of established models of art, which then command exorbitantly high prices in market and auction settings. He acknowledges his own poor skill as a painter, stating that the buyer "would receive an inferior painting if actually done by him," and claims that the best spot paintings done through him are by one of his assistants, Rachel. In other words, this unacknowledged assistant creates works of real value, with profits completely captured by Hirst through the inclusion of his signature on the final product. A case can be made that Hirst is stealing the labor and quality of his assistants, and profiting unjustly. On the other hand, his artistic frameworks are simplistic and easily replicated, requiring little actual ability by either him or his assistants. Instead, much of the "value" is justified by glorifying the "ideas" behind his pieces; Hirst himself justifies the factory model by claiming that factories produce ideas, but don't create the ideas themselves--these come from Hirst. However, much of these ideas seem to be attributed to the artworks after the fact; his practice of injecting deceased sharks with formaldehyde would admittedly raise low prices at auction if they were simply titled "shark;" it is the inclusion of a much more suggestive title such as Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living that produces any discussion whatsoever. The titles add value to otherwise benign works of simplistic art, and forces viewers to attribute a much more extensive meaning than would otherwise be possible.

Hirst generally produces six distinct categories of art. His tank pieces, labeled the Natural History Series, encompass a variety of dead animals preserved in much the same manner as the shark mentioned above, and consistently command high auction prices through the forced perception that they highlight the disparity between life and death, despite the fact that many replicas are produced and generally drivers of value like uniqueness are destroyed. His other categories produce much the same effect. The cabinet series encompass a collection of surgical tools or pill bottles in pharmacy medicine cabinets, as exampled by Blood of Christ or Lullaby Spring. His spot paintings have garnered a considerable amount of recognition, and consist of fifty or more multicolored circles on a white background--another supposed illusion to drugs, and easily mass produced by his army of assistants. His spin paintings involve Hirst spilling paint onto a revolving pottery wheel, and are so easily produced that Hirst has himself claimed that it is "impossible to make a bad one." Finally, Hirst's butterfly paintings are simply collages made of thousands of dismembered butterfly wings, again describing themes of life and death, and again easily produced in Hirst's factory setting.

Hirst's main dealer White Cube has sold over four hundred spin and butterfly paintings and over six hundred spot paintings, and it is no surprise that Hirst is regularly shown in the Gagosian Gallery, another marketing genius concerned more with status, brand, and manipulation of buyer's test than actual inherent artistic value. Hirst's marketing prowess has begun to transcend the art world, as he has ventured into a recent clothing line, and opened a short-lived club in New York City. A telling anecdote involves a noted auction house rejected a piece involving Stalin, stating that they never deal in connotations of Stalin or Hitler, but when asked if there would be any interest in a piece of Stalin branded by Hirst, the auction house replied that they would then have to purchase the piece, due to the ensured value that the brand commands. All in all, the factory setting fully commercializes the art market, providing mass-produced artistic pieces carrying forced and arbitrary meaning into a gullible public consumer base easily swayed by marketing ability and the common "herd mentality." The combination of these factors threatens to replace true artistic value with mass consumer-manipulation and the destruction of traditional aesthetic qualities of art. http://whitecube.com/artists/damien_hirst/
Takashi Murakami, a prominent Japanese artist with representation in several major cities across the globe, is making big waves on the contemporary art scene. It seems as if he has taken Warhol’s factory model and the idea of branding to a new level. Yet it can never be said of Murakami that he isn’t present in his artwork. In fact, by American standards, he could most likely be described as overbearing to a degree. His company is called Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. It is made up of 90 employees in Japan and the United States who work on the direct orders from the artist. The company also represents many other roles of the “company” in modern society:

It makes art. It designs merchandise. It acts as a manager, agent, and producer for seven other Japanese artists. It runs an art-fair-cum-festival called Geisai, and it does multimillion-dollar freelance work for fashion, TV, and music companies.

Represented by Blum and Poe of Los Angeles, Gagosian in New York, and Perrotin in Paris, there is no denying the artists international appeal. For one, he understands his place in the world. He says of his work that he is trying to straddle the border between Japanese subculture and art. He draws from his native country’s imagery and themes in order to make powerful critical statements about the state of branding and the spectacle in the growing global economy. And, unlike many artists working in the factory mode, he openly acknowledges his labor teams, sometimes even writing their names across the backs of canvases they have helped to create. Murakami is the first to acknowledge the fact that his work would not be possible without their efforts. Admitting that he is not in the business for the money, Murakami wishes to be a prolific artist who creates many things on a grand scale. This is almost impossible work for one man, so he sees his team’s vital place as his production crew. Yet he is not one to ever lose sight of his own vision. His assistants and laborers have almost zero creative input. Their work must be totally void of even the evidence of the human hand. For the art’s sake, they are necessary simply because Murakami does not possess some of the basic skills which would be necessary to create his large-scale but precise works. For instance, he himself admits to not being able to use the program Adobe Illustrator which allows the images he draws to be expanded without degradation. He hopes that his team will work in the place of a large digital production line. But like a machine, nothing gets done without his consent and every decision comes back to him for the final consultation. The laborers document every layer and part of a painting thoroughly so that Murakami can oversee each small detail even from overseas.

Part of the brilliance of Murakami’s practice is his astute awareness of the role of branding, marketing and communications in our society and how to manipulate those systems to his advantage. With work that is aesthetically appealing to a mass market of consumers, Murakami is able to get his stylistic prowess seen on the international markets for fashion, music, and the quotidien. One such effort was a collaboration with Louis Vuitton in which he designed a colorful handbag print which would go on to become one of their signature staples. In return, Takashi Murakami has painted several art pieces that include the pattern and flatten the space between the art and the commerce of the physical good. Further, Murakami embarked on a design for the album cover of international pop/rap star Kanye West. Kanye has been a huge success in his own market, and his association with Murakami helps each to cross over into the other’s world. Kanye gains a certain amount of respect for his Murakami’s cultural significance in the realm of fine art, while Murakami is able to gain recognition for his work from the masses which follow Kanye but might not have otherwise been exposed to his art in the pop culture realm. His paintings and sculptures are infused with what one assistant called “media-world beauty” which makes them marketable and allows them to act as a form of criticism of that same media which disseminates their imagery.

At his solo retrospective in Los Angeles, the show opened alongside a merchandise showroom which sold everything from hats, t-shirts, pens, pencils, and notebooks all emblazoned with Murakami’s imagery. This tactic was developed as a marketing scheme, much like the museum bookstore, to attract the general public to take home a small reminder of the artist. The artist is then forever a part of that person's consumerism. Allowing his work to become easily consumed is the next step for Murakami who must surely recognize the desire but inability of the average person to purchase his art.

http://www.takashimurakami.com/
http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/artworld/2008/04/14/080414craw_artworld_schjeldahl?currentPage=all
[http://www.moca.org/murakami/]
Hirst’s has a variety of marketing strategies. In one instance he is known to create intricate and creative titles that are an “integral part of marketing his work”. People flock to see the actual work of art that has been described by this intriguing title. The titles themselves can even produce as much discussion as the actual pieces themselves. In addition to unique titles, Hirst utilizes shock value to market himself. Many of his pieces are either unique in that few have created such oddly distinctive pieces or they are similar to existing pieces not well publicized from the original artist. One such piece was called The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living, which depicted a tiger shark encased in glass and formaldehyde solution. A shark encased in glass had been done before by a man named Eddie Saunders who showcased a golden hammerhead shark in his JD electrical shop in 1989. After claiming how his shark was self-caught and “more handsome” than Hirst’s shark, Saunders got a lot of media coverage, however no offers to buy his piece. Another marketing strategy is his forwardness and introducing topics people shy away from. For example, his pieces about death and mortality produce much discussion. The skull cast in platinum with human teeth was highly publicized project. He also had a prize-winning sculpture of a cow split in half, encased in two glass cases and a similarly split calf, called Mother and Child.

Most of the marketing appeal of Hirst is derived from this shock value and unexpected art pieces. He is controversial and controversy makes money. People are intrigued by what the next outrageous piece may be. This anticipation and interest in the shocking, is what gives Hirst his power. He has been branded as a powerful artist and his brand now goes a long way towards making him money. He is definitely an artist who has capitalized on people’s demand to be entertained and has provided this entertainment through the shocking and notorious works of art.

Picture of Damien Hirst:

Picture of some of Hirst’s most popular works:

David Hirst
For the Love of God

David Hirst

The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living

Works Cited:

http://www.chicagotribune.com/health/sns-rt-us-damienhirst-spottre80a0w1-20120111,0,2283433.story


Damien Hirst News:

http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/related-731-damien-hirst.do

Interview by Charlie Rose with Damien Hirst:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbOJe8pCP5M&feature=fvst

Video about Hirst auction:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2QN6sFx7pl&feature=fvst
Daniel Chazen

Becoming a branded artist like Jeff Koons is probably as much about marketing strategy and marketing appeal as it is the quality of their work. For Koons, his marketing is all about being a “controversial figure” who has a great instinct for “self-promotion” (Thompson 73,80). He does not hide his desire to market himself or his work; he candidly says that he wants to increase his “market share” by placing work in many galleries. He openly says that his target market is “really rich collectors” (Thompson 82).

Here is a picture of Jeff Koons:

(Looks more like a businessman than an artist; he used to be a commodities broker)

As a sculptor who uses the factory model, he has created some controversial, but still popular pieces of modern art. His works include a sculpture of Michael Jackson and his pet monkey, a porcelain sculpture of the Pink Panther in the arms of a buxom blonde, which he promoted as being about masturbation, and a 10 foot tall steel Balloon Dog (pictured below).

A 10-foot-tall version of Jeff Koons’s “Balloon Dog” sculpture on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art:

As a marketing strategy for his work, he places the first in a series with a museum or branded collector – thus creating appeal in the work. He then uses that placement to market subsequent works in the series by saying that a museum or famous collector has one. This kind of marketing makes a lot of sense; as long as you can afford it, it's nice to have something that you can say to yourself or other people is also in a museum.

His marketing appeal is not only seen in how he promotes his work, but also how he promotes himself. A self-described “median man,” he advertises his gallery exhibitions by portraying himself as a rock star. He has autograph signings like a movie star or big time celebrity. He says things that are controversial, if not offensive, but still importantly create attention, like “abstraction and luxury are the guard dogs of the upper class.” His marketing strategy is basically that controversy is good – it’s what the people want – it sells modern art. And given his success, it seems that his marketing appeal is working.

Here is a video from Sotheby’s about his Pink Panther Sculpture:

The question that comes to mind after reading about Koons and the other artists, is can you become successful in the modern art market, as an artist or dealer, without some type of public relations? Unless you are a great promoter of yourself and your artwork, I think success will be hard to achieve without public relations people working for you.

Here is a link to his webpage: http://www.jeffkoons.com/

Here is a link to an interview with Koons: http://www.jca-online.com/koons.html

Here is a link to some of his work on display at the MoMA: http://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=6622
Elena Cestero

Of all the artists profiled in the readings, Takashi Murakami stood out in particular. While Warhol, Koons, and Hirst seem (or seemed in the case of Warhol) to gleefully exploit themselves through marketing and branding, Murakami seems less enthusiastic but resigned to this aspect of contemporary art.

Murakami has three Japanese studios in addition to one in New York in which he employs seventy to ninety people. His studios are consolidated under the label of Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd., which directly indicates their identity as a company/factory. Not only does the company produce Murakami’s work, but it also does marketing and produces merchandise, organizes art festivals, and manages and represents seven other Japanese artists (six of the seven are women). While Murakami’s art is mostly produced by his assistants, he is very present and demanding in their creation. Murakami’s celebrity clients such as Louis Vuitton and Kanye West further establish his fame and provide him with visibility and marketing opportunities. Notably, Murakami does not have a signed contract with his dealers and has been careful to ensure his rights to his work and all final approvals regarding it through extensive legal documents.

What I found interesting about Murakami is that while he acknowledges that marketing and branding are essential to his success and uses them generously (he has a merchandise room at his exhibitions and canvases of the candy colored Louis Vuitton label that he designed), there is a sense that perhaps this is not something he likes or wants to do but does because he recognizes the advantages. While Warhol, Koons, and Hirst are/were equally aware of what they are/were doing, they seem(ed) much more certain and exuberant about employing self-promotion and branding tactics. Murakami and his representation seem to feel that branding is something that must be used to attract the interest of patrons, especially from younger generations; he also uses this as an explanation for the “video game” style of his work.

Also significant about Murakami is his upfront acknowledgement that his works are collaborations by listing the names of the other artists or assistants involved in the production of a work on the back of the work. While Murakami’s employees describe the work on his productions as intense and having no room for creativity, Murakami promotes and encourages the individual careers of his assistants and the artists he represents which is quite unusual. He is very serious about his work and although he is certainly wealthy he lives simply.

The concept of the “art factory” where an artist supervises the creation of their ideas while others produce them is fascinating (and I personally think disappointing). Are you really an artist if you have the idea for a work but someone else produces it? How can someone who has no skills in drawing, painting, sculpting etc. be considered an artist? It seems to me that most of these artists are not particularly talented artists but rather genius salesmen and marketers. Do most patrons realize that the works are not actually produced by the artists who sign them, do they even care? In essence, it seems that patrons are just paying for a signature (i.e.: the Hirst signed Stalin painting), which I find amazing.

Examples of works by Murakami (and his assistants), "Flowers of Joy" and "Hiropon":

June Shin

The richest living contemporary artist Damien Hirst pumps out paintings, sculptures, installations, and commodities through a factory-style, manufacturing mode of production, which raises some critical questions and contentious answers to those questions.
How much of a work of art should be done by the artist's own hands to be called his? Is a work that was not at all touched by the artist himself really his? Hirst's production of art is no doubt modeled after the Warhol Factory, but this mode of production goes way back in art history. Rembrandt of the 17th century Netherlands is an example. He had a group of workshop assistants as well as students who produced works in his style or based on his earlier work, which he then signed and sold in the market under his name. While this old master's reason for his manufacturing system seems to have been financial (he was constantly in debt), Hirst's, it is claimed, rooted in his artistic principle that the idea is what matters. However, such extensive effort to distinguish "authentic" works done by the artist's hands as evident in the Rembrandt Project shows that, even in modern times, the definition of authenticity in art is revolved around whose hands made the artwork in question.

Hirst's all about the idea. The problem is that his works are criticized for the shallowness and worthlessness of the very ideas that Hirst claims to be his own and presents as the core of his art (see cartoons). Even before the legitimacy of the concepts behind Hirst's works can be put into question, a more fundamental problem is put forward: is the idea enough to make good art? Is an artist with innovative ideas necessarily a great artist? Those who oppose the type of art Hirst presents would argue that ideas need to be translated into a form of art in artistically respectable ways, which Hirst fails to accomplish with his manufactured, oft-called "kitschy" art.

What Hirst is unquestionably skilled at is branding of his own name. When a name is elevated to such a degree as Hirst's, everyone wants a piece of it. Also, a cheaper option like the Hirst T-hirst, broadens the artist's target audience. This way, those who do not have millions of dollars to spend on his paintings, installations, and other forms of work, all of which are sold at shockingly high prices at galleries and auction houses, can still have a Hirst. His marketing strategies are not unlike the high-end designer brands' release of signature key chains, charms, and cardholders that are more affordable than their other goods. When things like ashtrays and salt and pepper shakers are sold for thousands of dollars, it becomes clear that what is being bought is really the name rather than the objects themselves (Even I have salt and pepper shakers that are aesthetically more pleasing and more functional). When The Fragile Truth sold for 1.2 million GBP, the news probably made the British pharmacists take another good look at their medicine cabinets.

Links to the Hirst salt and pepper shakers and ashtrays:
https://encrypted-tbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQXhrQAS-UZblr_QcKvCc55P-4KarR57ELxQnvKVsAecZBrC7m1
https://encrypted-tbn3.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ9v4GibfkLXXVt4k3T0ej-v3-mLQwP4gb93TWtkwj-an_j77ov

An ordinary medicine cabinet in a pharmacy. https://encrypted-tbn1.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcT-i43O1a_h2bX2e4xkK-mQ50WPGLRrUFONykkmkC36i_RmvMrg

However, the most striking example of this name selling business would be the Stalin painting by an anonymous painter, which was first rejected by the auction houses, that was turned into a 140,000 work when Hirst added a red dot on Stalin’s nose and signed his name.

Another question that arises at this point is whether this branding of artist’s name and commodification of his art to be frowned upon. Is this new concept and practice corrupting art and steering the art world in a wrong direction or is it to be accepted as a new, modern take on art? What seems to be at play here is what Jerry Saltz’ calls “gamesmanship” in art. One cannot help but wonder, since when did art become a game?

Kelly Zona

Damien Hirst is the most commercially successful living contemporary artist of our time. Inspired by factory style artists such as Warhol, Hirst’s work brings into focus the commodification of art.

Hirst uses several marketing strategies to set him apart from his contemporaries in order to secure his brand.

One of these strategies is shock value and the confrontation of his audience with controversial subjects. His Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living features a giant tiger shark floating in a formaldehyde filled encasement [1] Death is a major subject that runs through much of his work. He has done several other tank pieces featuring dead animals encased in formaldehyde. His Butterflies series is a collection of works made from butterfly wings, juxtaposing the beauty of the works themselves with the ugliness of death [3].

Images of butterfly paintings can be seen here:
https://www.othercriteria.com/browse/all/projects/butterfliesproject/

Another of Hirst's marketing strategies is his comment on the commodification of art through his works. His work, For the Love of God, a human skull covered in 8,601 diamonds, seems as if to say it is literally the monetary ostentation of this work that make it valuable. Hirst claimed that the work sold but it appears that it was bought by a consortium including himself, the owner of his gallery, and his business manager [2]. As I mentioned in my last assignment, one wonders if perhaps this project signals the limit in the commodification of art and brand equity. Is this work so ridiculously ostentatious that one actually loses faith in its value? Does it too directly confront the art world with an ugly reflection of its own unchecked obsession with money? Even if it didn’t sell to a collector, Hirst was still able to generate media attention as thousands of people waited outside his gallery to see its unveiling in 2007 [2].

Image of For the Love of God can be seen here:
https://www.othercriteria.com/browse/all/projects/skulls/

Hirst has also moved into other fields as a marketing technique. He designs T-shirts and has experimented with several restaurant ventures in which he displays his own work. It seems he is testing the limit to his own brand.

Images of T-shirts can be seen here:
https://www.othercriteria.com/browse/all/projects/butterfliesproject/

Personally, I am curious to know if the factory production trend will continue in the art world, taking into account both its costs and benefits. While my background is primarily in architecture, I see a parallel between the two fields. In most large design studios today, the principal architect generates the main concepts of the work, and most of the development and detailing of these ideas is left to others. Though architecture has its own set of constraints, and any large project will always need a team of specialists, I think this “factory model” can often lead to a more interesting and dynamic end result. Does anyone think that art will continue to grow and benefit from the factory model, or does it separate the concept too much from the physical work?

Bibliography:

Don Thompson: [ARTH 4696 FINLEY Damien Hirst and the Shark THOMPSON.pdf|download/attachments/163686828/ARTH+4696+FINLEY+Damien+Hirst+and+the+Shark+THOMPSON.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1307993226000]

Don Thompson: [ARTH 4696 FINLEY Warhol Koons and Emin THOMPSON.pdf|download/attachments/163686828/ARTH+4696+FINLEY+Warhol+Koons+and+Emin+THOMPSON.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1307993482000]

Sarah Thornton: [ARTH 4696 FINLEY The Studio Visit THORNTON.pdf|download/attachments/163686828/ARTH+4696+FINLEY+The+Studio+Visit+THORNTON.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1307993514000]
Jeff Koons is one of the most well known artists of contemporary art today. He is known for his large-scale, unique and shocking art, which he has carefully crafted in order to optimize his selling potential. Koons has been known to associate his methods of selling himself and his art in economic terms, thereby creating controversy with art enthusiasts, and creating more publicity around his name. Not only does Koons openly say he is trying to market himself, he also describes his method of creating art in detail, discussing how he is simply the brains behind the operation, and he has numerous people under him who actually physically make the art. You can see in the following interview his studio in New York, complete with the people in the background creating all of his pieces. He also explains in this interview that his process is basically a paint by numbers operation.  

I believe that Jeff Koons creates his art with no further meaning than just to shock and awe the audience in order to sell his artwork at exorbitant prices. These prices also are used to shock the audience, because if something is that much money, it must be worth it. Galleries and auctions also helped to promote his uniqueness through staging elaborate marketing ploys, including hiring actors to walk around in pink panther costumes to promote a piece of his depicting a busty blonde holding the pink panther.

Koons also used the shock value to promote this sculpture, by declaring that the piece was about masturbation. There is no indication that this sculpture could be about masturbation, and Koons did not explain this until the piece was up for sale, and he was specifically asked. I believe, rather, that Koons was trying to increase his marketability through creating more controversy.

Koons also demonstrated his desire to shock his audience with controversial material through his depictions of graphic sexual acts with his equally controversial pornstar wife. One such piece was his photograph “Red Butt” which extremely graphically depicts him having anal sex with his wife. Christie’s auction increases the intrigue surrounding Koons and his art specifically with this piece, by covering it with a panel in the auction stating that it depicts graphic material that may be unsuitable to certain audiences. Even on the website for Christie’s, they warn you of the graphic material, and make you click twice in order to ensure you really want to see it as seen here:  http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4489948

Through increasing the intrigue surrounding Koons’ controversial art, the auction houses and galleries can play upon the reactions of the crowd to increase the price of each piece.

Jeff Koons utilizes the factory method of creating art not only to create pieces more effectively, but also to create controversy surrounding his pieces. By openly discussing how he does not actually make any of his pieces, as well as creating controversial and graphic art. By shocking or intriguing his audience, Koons has been able to sell his pieces at very expensive prices.
Here is another example of Koons' work, where he just took pieces of everyday household items and put them in exhibits. This also demonstrates his desire to almost pull one over on his audiences, which they have all responded to by purchasing more pieces. It is quite impressive how Jeff Koons has been able to market himself, implementing his factory methods and by doing this has become a very successful contemporary artist.
When one mentions Pop Art, no other artist is as much identified with it as Andy Warhol. He is referred to as the father of pop art. Warhol had a philosopher that would turn out to drive and move to content of repetition in his work. “What’s great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coca Cola, Liz Taylor drinks Coca Cola, and just think, you can drink Coca Cola, too. A coke is a coke and no amount of money can get you a better coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the cokes are the same and all the cokes are good. Liz Taylor knows it, the President knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it.” By minimizing the role of his own hand in the production of his work and declaring that he wanted to be “a machine,” Warhol sparked a revolution in art.

Warhol's marketing strategy was to make his art like a commodity that everyone had once owned, or had-the very basics of our everyday commercial experience, then making them into art by screen printing but then also through mass production in a repetitive format. Through this with the help of art workers helping to mass produce his works, he minimized the role of his own hand in the production of his works and declaring that he wanted to be a machine. Warhol was branded in every way imaginable. With a silver wig and signature red-rim glasses, Warhol turned himself into a branded and recognizable product. In 1968 Andy Warhol placed an advertisement in The Village Voice: “I’ll endorse with my name any of the following: clothing, AC-DC, cigarettes, small tapes, sound equipment, ROCK ‘N’ ROLL RECORDS, anything, film and film equipment, Food, Helium, Whips, MONEY!! love and kisses ANDY WARHOL. Over 20 years after his death, one cannot envision the degree to which he has been commercialized.

*Eight Elvises* is the most expensive painting of Warhol ever bought worth $100 million

Below is an excerpt from the last interview of Andy Warhol with Paul Taylor, where he talks about good art, and the market for art.

**Paul Taylor:** Is a better commercial artist one who sells more work?

**Andy Warhol:** I don’t know. When I started out, art was doing down the drain. The people who used to magazine illustrations and the covers were being replaced by photographers. And when they started using photographers, I started to show my work with galleries. Everybody also was doing window decoration. That led into more galleries. I had some paintings in a window, then in a gallery.

**Paul Taylor:** Is there a parallel situation now?

**Andy Warhol:** No, it just caught on so well that there’s a new gallery open every day now. There are a lot more artists, which is real great.

**Paul Taylor:** What has happened to the idea of good art?

**Andy Warhol:** It’s all good art.

**Paul Taylor:** Is that to say that it’s all equal?

**Andy Warhol:** “Yeah well, I don’t know, I can’t...”

**Paul Taylor:** You’re not interested in making distinctions.

**Andy Warhol:** Well no, I just can’t tell the difference. I don’t see why one Jasper Johns sells for three million and one sells for, you know, like four hundred thousand. They were both good paintings.

**Paul Taylor:** The market for your work has changed a little in the last few years. To people my age - in their twenties - you were always more important than to the collecting group of people in their fifties and sixties.

**Andy Warhol:** Well, I think the people who buy art now are these younger kids who have a lot of money.

**Paul Taylor:** And that’s made a difference to your market.
Andy Warhol: Yeah, a little bit.

**Paul Taylor**: How important is it for you to maintain control?

**Andy Warhol**: I've been busy since I started - since I was a working artist. If I wasn't showing in New York I was doing work in Germany, or I was doing portraits.

McKenzie Sullivan

Damien Hirst, like Jeff Koons exploits the “factory-model” as both artists don't actually really physically contribute to the crafting of their artworks. In an interview at Gagosian in 2004 Hirst pointed out that his artworks: the shark, the spots and the butterfly paintings, were produced by a team of assistants. Several assistants work on each painting so no one person is ever responsible for a whole work of art. Hirst typically adds a few brush strokes and his signature. His reasoning behind this rather crafty factory-method is that a buyer would get an inferior painting if it was done by only him. He claims to like the idea of a factory to produce work, which separates the work from the ideas, but that he would never like the factory to produce ideas. Personally I don’t think this method is exactly artistically ethical especially at the prices Hirst’s work sells for. This method devalues the originality and singularity of the artwork. It seems Hirst is more dedicated to the creative thought process and idea of the work rather than the actual physical creation of the work. I believe it’s a cop out to do this. Hirst only partakes in one half of being a true artist. Although the idea may be his, he contributes little to the synthesizing of the idea.

Hirst’s factory works similarly to the way high-end couture fashion houses do. Luxury Fashion designers such as Prada, Gucci or Louis Vuitton create couture fashion, which is debuted at fashion week each season. These couture creations are only clothing a certain type of person with a large budget can afford. The designers also create “ready-to-wear” collections which are based on the couture creations, i.e. they have the same colors or patterns etc. but the “ready-to-wear” clothing is much more affordable and not as extravagant. Similarly Hirst creates t-shirts for those visitors unable to afford the million-dollar painting or the signed prints at Gagosian.
For Example: on the left is a piece is a from Alexander McQueen's "Platos Atlantis" Spring/Summer 2010 collection. The Leggings on the right are a "ready-to-wear" take on the Couture collection. They feature the same textiles but retail for much less.
This Damien Hirst butterfly t-shirt is available at the Gagosian Retail Store. This T-Shirt and even Hirst's prints are like "ready-to-wear" versions of his "couture" paintings.

Hirst's strategy to create these less-expensive versions of his art are a prime example of how successful he is at marketing himself. He wants to appeal to be accessible to everyone, even those who are not involved in the art world.

Damien Hirst is essentially famous for suspending dead animals, cows and sheep, in steel-and-glass tanks filled with formaldehyde. The works (the most famous being the large shark in a tank called The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living) have made Hirst a "bad boy" of art. Many great claims are made about the depths of his work; not only is he said to criticize Western corruptions of the spirit, such as materialism and indifference toward the natural world, but, it's thought, he is also engaged in a profound meditation upon death. Damien Hirst's art maybe an acquired taste and his talent might be questionably but without a doubt he is one of the art world's most successful marketers. He knows exactly how to manipulate the "wants" of his collectors. I believe Hirst is popular because he reflects his time. He works with ready-mades, shock, and irony to make conceptual points. He appeals to an audience always searching for a new boundary to cross. Hirst capitalizes even when people find his works revolting (bad press is still press!). The disgust in Hirst's works is reassuring that he is still radical and grotesquely "cutting edge." I personally believe Hirst is an expert showboat and a social symbol rather than an actual artist.
Photo: This is the view of the hallway to the lower level of the “Gagosian Gallery Retail Store” on Madison Ave, in New York. The Wallpaper is a Damian Hirst creation that has flowers with cigarette butts in them! His art is even wallpaper!

Photo: This is the basement of the “Gagosian Gallery Retail” store which sells signed Hirst prints from $5,000-$30,000 USD.
Jeff Koons is seen by many in the contemporary art community as the next Andy Warhol. Judging by his approach to the actual production of the art, many critics may be spot on. One thing that bothers many people about Koons' art is that he does not physically touch all of the art he makes. That isn't to say he has no impact on the art he produces. Koons employs roughly 80 people in his New York studio who work on his art which Koons conceptualizes. Many in the art community criticize Koons because of his mass marketing approach to sales. Koons formerly worked as a trader on Wall St. and it is clear his training has carried over to the Art World. He speaks at exhibitions about “increasing market share”, and enormous publicity stunts.

His work has a large range, from silk-screens to lavish sculptures. However, one aspect of his work carries across mediums-capitalistic quantity. His sculptures and casts seem to be one of a kind but Koons produces multiples that sell for quantities which are reserved for singular pieces. *Michael Jackson and Bubbles,* pictured below has three copies in the series. When the third one sold at auction, the auction was not just for the work but for the access to the family of art collectors with such developed tastes.

Marketing is equally important to Koons. While other artists may think it is selling out to have a full fledged marketing campaign, Koons revels in this capitalistic approach. Many times ads for his gallery showings depict Koons like a rockstar with women in bikinis. Koons’ art is as much a medium of emotion as it is a comment on the capitalism of the current art market.

My question for the class is would you buy a famous artist's piece if you knew it was created in a factory, perhaps not even by the artist him/herself. I personally would be less likely to buy famous art if I had any doubts of who made the art- however I understand that many do not care who created the art, only the message.