

# Moments of Valuation

Exploring Sites of Dissonance

*Edited by*

Ariane Berthoin Antal, Michael Hutter,  
and David Stark

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# 1

## Pragmatist Perspectives on Valuation: An Introduction

*Michael Hutter and David Stark*

A guest takes a sip of wine and puckers his lips as he puts the glass back down. An art expert claims in court that a recently discovered oil painting was not by Leonardo da Vinci. An international board of accountants suggests entering assets at their market value in the balance sheets of companies. All three cases involve acts of valuation. The wine taster, amateur or professional, signals the discovery of a surprisingly good wine, connoisseurs perform as arbiters of attribution to the work of a famous painter, and auditors use discretion in deciding which technique of estimating the present value of a firm's assets will be applied. All three cases involve uncertainty: something new is entering the world, and someone, or some group in society has to determine its worth, its dangers, and its potential. The new vintage has its distinct taste; the attribution of the discovered painting to Leonardo's hand remains speculative; the estimation of an asset's "fair value" accounts for unforeseen changes of worth since its acquisition.

Is there comparability in these cases of valuation? And if so, what do we discover about the failure and the success of innovations?

As modern society transforms itself into a society of continuous self-change, the scope for innovation widens to all processes that introduce something new. A very broad definition of innovation is needed to capture cases as diverse as the shapes of specific synthesizer sounds to new labor market policies, or from a new fashionable style of painting to the invention of a mathematical proof. New products, styles, and practices come to be selected and positioned as valuable in communities, organizations, and markets. This process is by no means trivial. In order to enter a social world of meaning, the unknown item must be recognized as new (Hutter et al. 2010). The quality of newness moves into the focus of research: How is it that an

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## 4

# Dissonant Translations: Artistic Sources of Innovation in Creative Industries

Michael Hutter

One of the perfectly groomed hands of a woman rests on a silver mirror, the other one, embellished with a jewel bracelet and a ring, touches a bottle of Jergens Lotion. The image in Figure 4.1 was published in *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1928. Its creator was Edward Steichen, at the time one of the most prominent photographers. The hands of the mostly female readers rarely looked like those in the advertisement, and they were surrounded by more mundane objects. But they could buy a bottle of the very same lotion, be touched by its content and engage in a fantasy of luxury. The attributes of worth, assembled and compressed into one image by Steichen and his studio, were translated into the value attributes of a hand cream.

## Introduction

The photograph of the hands touching a bottle of lotion (Figure 4.1) was clearly invented and produced for a commercial purpose. However, its effectiveness as an image, reproduced in the small space of a journal page, depended on a number of artistic features. Those features were characteristic of Steichen's style of photography. Steichen was known to draw on a vast repertoire of artworks and of artistic practices. In this particular image, he cites an arrangement of hands that can be found in many portraits by Ingres, created 70 years earlier (Figure 4.20). Steichen's skills as an artistic photographer seem to be directly related to his successful inventions as a commercial photographer.



Figure 4.1. Walter Thompson Agency: Advertisement for Jergens Lotion, with Edward Steichen photograph, Ladies' Home Journal, Jan. 1928, in Johnston 1997: 138.

Yet, it would be too simple to attribute the transfer of value from an artistic source to an industrially reproducible commodity to an opaque mental process within an exceptionally talented individual. The process is, in large parts, social and thus empirically observable: there exists a product that is made primarily of symbols. The symbols carry meaning, and the assembled meaning contained in a photograph, or a novel, or a movie is able to generate an experience for a person who exposes her or his senses to the product.<sup>1</sup>

The production of symbolic goods differs markedly from material production. Rather than transforming raw materials into a sequence of identical forms, like cars, a "master copy" is invented, produced and then copied through a medium of reproduction, like print. Reproduction in electronic charges, or digital copying, increases in effectiveness while decreasing in cost. In consequence, a growing share of total economic value is generated by sectors that generate such symbol-based experiences.

Recently, these sectors have been categorized as creative industries. They encompass the traditional cultural sector (e.g., operas and museums), analogue and digital media (e.g., TV and videogames), and various services provided around original symbolic forms (e.g., design, fashion, architecture and advertising) (DCMS, 1998; UNCTAD, 2008). In all these sectors, master copies are generated and then repeated, either in live performances or in activating the copies drafted from the master copy. The cost for a single master copy can exceed hundreds of millions of Euros, while the cost of further copies might be infinitesimally small.

In all of these branches, artistic sources are at the initial end. The finished product, like the journal ad with Steichen's photo, reveals connections to concrete, assignable artistic works of the past. It seems to draw part of its sensory and emotional impact from such sources.

But how is this "transfer of value" from artistic sources to symbolic products to be modelled? The use of quotation marks indicates that the notion of "transfer" is only roughly indicative, without any specification of what is transferred, and how it is transferred. By means of three historical cases, selected from different branches of the creative industries, this question will be pursued.

In a first section, I will discuss attempts to employ the notion of translation as terminological option for the transfer of value. I will also argue that the trajectory necessarily includes phases of dissonance. The following sections apply the concept of "dissonant translations" to three cases for which the social process of creation is well documented: a successful Disney movie, Steichen's advertising photos, and Vuitton handbags with a pattern designed

<sup>1</sup> Scitovsky (1976) suggested that there is already a class of products demanded for their mental stimulus rather than their physical comfort.

by Murakami. In a last section, I will argue that these trajectories, in which artistic value is translated into values purchased in markets, should be recognized as moments of valuation.

### Value Transfer Through Dissonant Translations

The search for experiences is strongly driven by a desire for the unknown, for the surprising (Hutter 2011). Symbolic products, e.g. novels or vintage wines, carry meaning, and meaning is of interest as new meaning. Once the novel is read, the meaning is known, and the product's value decreases. In a few instances, new interpretations continue to be drawn from the artefact, as is the case in Shakespeare's sonnets, but also with old bottles of wine. Producers in the creative industries are focused on offering novel products at fairly regular intervals. Because the symbolic content of their products is novel, nobody knows how successful a new offer will be. Most of the products will have a very short life span, while some of them become canonical and continue to generate new value.

Creators, producers and providers can only guess what will "work for" potential users—what will generate affective value in their minds. In most instances, the creators do not invent the features that generate these values from scratch. They work along a familiar, recognizable basic form, and add or detract some of the features. In doing so, they employ symbolic forms that have proven their impact on users—by being praised, conserved and re-performed (Dewey 1939). They integrate these older works, or a few of their strands of meaning, into their own symbolic forms, and thus make them more likely to become valuable. As users experience the content of the novel good—of a concert, of a garment worn—they make it their own and are willing to pay for future variations of it.

How is the value of an original invention infused into novel products—into new kinds of movies, or into new photos in ladies' magazines, or into new fashion accessories? I will discuss the explanatory reach of the concept of translation. It is an attempt to grasp the paradox of a form of meaning that is continued and newly invented at the same time.

The notion of "translation" is frequent in inquiries that investigate certain kinds of value transfer. The common English term indicates a change of signifier for an unchanged signified content. One assumes that something expressed in the idiom of the original artistic source is translated into another idiom. The assumption implies a high degree of regularity for such activity. Translators have small degrees of freedom in their semantic choices. The variability of translation in creating new symbolic products is much larger.

Recent contributions to cultural sociology operate with a different meaning, a meaning that stems from the French term "translation" (see Callon 1986 and Latour 2005).<sup>2</sup> In this interpretation, translation refers to a displacement<sup>3</sup> or delegation of power within networks, and networks are characterized by "the ability of each actor to make other actors do unexpected things" (Latour 1993: 129). Such a notion of networks is helpful in linking the capacities of original sources with the affective impact of symbolic products. Whether the delegation of political power that occurs between the phases of problematization and mobilization (Callon 1986) has similarity with the selection of artistic features by creators and producers, and the subsequent effect of creative products on their users, is yet to be shown. In organization theory, there has been an attempt to employ the concept outside of the political field, for the chain of activities leading from ideas to the appearance of commercial objects (Czarniawska and Joerges 1995). In this model, ideas "travel" to their materialized destinations within Latour-type networks. Would it make sense to employ a similar notion of translation to explain the particular path from an initial artistic form to its later appearance in the form of a commercially valued creative product?

I suggest two specifications to the translation process: it is assumed to be affected by dissonance, and it is assumed to go through two complementary phases: One of the phases takes place among those actors who create, produce and reproduce the novel product, the other one takes place among those who interpret and experience the product, or a copy of its symbolic form. I will call the first one the "authoring phase," the second one the "reading phase."

In both phases, value change is perceived as an instance of dissonance. Dissonance is the term suggested by Stark to indicate what happens when "alternative principles of the valuable" encounter each other (Stark 2009: 211). Dissonance indicates a change between worlds of understanding, a movement through a period of indecision, confusion, even panic (Stark 2009 and Chapter 1 of this volume). Dissonance is more than just rupture; it is a particular kind of constructive change, just as a change in harmonic structures might for a while be heard as noise, and only after that moment as meaningful, emotionally charged music.

Stark investigates the innovative effect of dissonance within organizations, but the phenomenon is just as observable within less firmly coordinated fields of interaction.<sup>4</sup> The process has a mental as well as a social dimension. Moments of mental dissonance are observed through introspection,

<sup>2</sup> In French language, *translation* differs from *traduction*—a distinction easily overlooked in English discussion.

<sup>3</sup> The common meaning of the French term refers to the displacement of vehicles along rails or other paths.

<sup>4</sup> I use the terms "field," "play of meaning," and "social system" synonymously.

social dissonance is observed in public debates amongst the two groups of agents noted above—those who might collectively be called authors of creative products, and those who can read or otherwise perceive the meaning of the product and then report about their experience.<sup>5</sup>

In the authoring phase, artistic value principles clash with commercial cost-revenue-principles. The selection of features of form, the ability to be “inspired” by some major artwork or by some lesser form of aesthetic expression, comes into contrast with calculations of revenue, based on future demand for copies of the master copy. The sales are expected to repay and reward the enterprise of production. These expectations, inevitably, are governed by observations of the complementary phase of dissonance among readers.

In the reading phase, the copies are used to create experiences. The dissonance is now between expectations concerning the further trajectory of the experience—the suspense of a novel or a trapeze act, the surprise of seeing a bike in a design studio, or witnessing a murder in a movie. The dissonance contains a stimulus that can result in disappointment or in pleasure. The value of the stimulus is not only mental, but also influenced by the observation of disappointment or joy in others, and by the possibility to establish links between members of an audience by sharing judgments about the experience’s qualities.

Both types of dissonant translation are driven by dissonance—the translation from the initial artistic spark to the product template, and the translation from the acquired copy to the critical judgments of those who experienced the product. Both phases are phases of valuation.

Can dissonant translations be detected in the material documenting the genesis and the market success of creative industries products? This chapter explores three cases with conditions favorable to a positive answer: The creative products were highly successful at their time of market introduction, and their “making of” is fairly well documented. If these cases do not show indications of dissonant translations, then the validity of the model for less outstanding products is questionable.

The authors of the three products employed different kinds of reproduction media: repeat movie theater performances, mass-printed advertisements and custom-printed surfaces of fashion accessories. The kinds of symbolic content translated are also diverse: particular graphic outlines, complex studio arrangements to generate painterly effects, and visual marks distinctive enough to be recognized as trademarks.

<sup>5</sup> Note that an individual human actor can operate as an agent in both phases.

### Three Cases

#### Louis Vuitton’s Murakami *Handbags*

In luxury goods production, the seller’s historical pedigree “rubs off” on the buyer or user whose family may never have owned objects that are older than a decade. *Louis Vuitton* has accumulated such a pedigree because its founder cornered the luggage market since 1853 with the triple innovation of a flat-bottom canvas trunk, a secure lock and a virtually indestructible canvas. The company grew into a global market leader for luxury leather goods. In 1987, family control ended when the major investor, Bernard Arnault, bought out the company and merged it into a larger conglomerate of luxury goods production, *Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy* (LVMH).

The major steps toward a world-wide operating enterprise are credited to Georges Vuitton, the son of the founder. By the end of the 19th century, the company was so successful that it had to protect its products from counterfeiting. In consequence, Georges had the “Monogram Canvas Pattern” designed, and registered it as a trademark in 1896. Still today, the company profits from the instant recognizability of the Monogram Canvas.

The prestige of the brand is maintained at high current cost: frequent photo campaigns in print media, spectacular sponsoring events, and exclusive shop presence in key centers of wealth concentration are all part of the strategy. In 2001, art director and fashion designer Marc Jacobs initiated a consistent practice of temporary collaborations with leading artists. After cooperating with Stephen Sprouse on a graffiti pattern and Robert Wilson on a window scenography, Jacobs signed up Takashi Murakami in 2002.

Murakami was born in Tokyo in 1963. His early training was in animation drawing for *manga* cartoons and *anime* films. In addition, he studied *nihonga*, a specific school of traditional Japanese drawing and painting techniques. He developed his own cartoon figures, connected into a cartoon world with dozens of characters, surrounded by detailed narratives as to their origins and relationships, and supported by video sequences set to electronic music. Central characters are “DOB,” who faintly resembles “Mickey Mouse,” and the couple “Kaikai” and “Kiki.” After a stay in New York in 1994, Murakami gained increasing recognition and reputation in Western art circles. His popularity among a young audience in Japan was greatly increased by his 7-year-long cooperation with *Louis Vuitton*. Within those circles who represent traditional versions of Japanese art, he is seen as someone who has turned venerable cultural values into cheap merchandise, as well as someone who has tricked Western art collectors into paying high prices for artworks that use popular Japanese means of expression.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> On the history of the Japanese art scene whose most prominent member is Murakami, see Favell (2011). See also the bibliography in MOCA (2007).

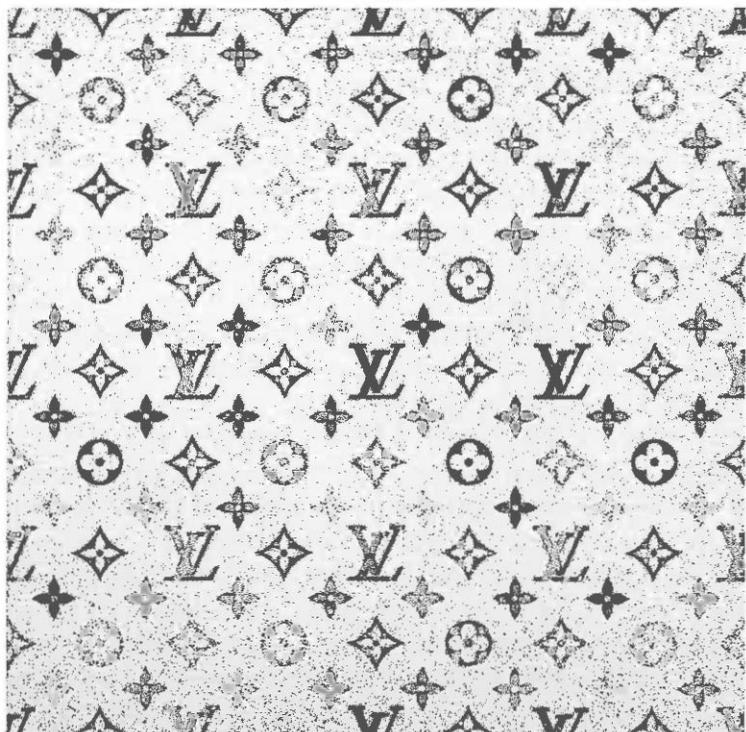


Figure 4.2. Takashi Murakami: Monogram Multicolore, 2003 Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd.

Murakami designed patterns that were used on scarves, rugs, shoes, umbrellas and stores of the company. Most of the attention concentrated on patterns designed for handbags that were “issued” in limited editions of a few thousand objects.<sup>7</sup> To get a sense of the kind of variation invented by Murakami and his studio, three particularly attractive designs will be described in greater detail. They were all introduced in 2003.

*Monogram Multicolore* (Figure 4.2) leaves the four components of the Monogram pattern and their arrangement intact, but changes the color scheme. The background is either white or black, and the signs are brought into a scheme of light colors that is adapted from Murakami’s works.

*Cherry Blossom* sprinkles Murakami-style pink blossoms sparsely over the original Monogram Canvas. A few years later, *Cerises* was issued which substituted pairs of cherries for the blossoms.

<sup>7</sup> The exact size of the editions is not revealed by the company.



Figure 4.3. Takashi Murakami: Eye Love Superflat, 2003 Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd.

The most successful of the patterns seems to have been *Eye Love Superflat* (Figure 4.3). In this pattern, the round flower sign is substituted with a sign of particular relevance in the Murakami universe, the “jellyfish eyes.” Jellyfish eyes have become Murakami’s trademark.<sup>8</sup> Both trademarks, that of the image maker and that of the luggage maker, are woven into a seamless pattern, within the same color scheme.<sup>9</sup>

The market launch of the Murakami designs on Vuitton products was accompanied by an animated film, titled *Superflat Monogram*. The heroine, a small girl, falls through a long tube into a world inhabited by Murakami cartoon characters, interspersed are Vuitton logos. In 2009, a second video titled *Superflat First Love*, was released. Purportedly commemorating six years of

<sup>8</sup> In April 2013, Murakami’s first feature-length film, titled *Jellyfish Eyes*, premiered.

<sup>9</sup> Noteworthy is a late addition in 2008, *Monogramouflage*, which shows the monogram pattern in black on a background of abstract shapes in beige against camouflage green.

Vuitton/Murakami cooperation, it featured the same girl as a teenager, again falling into the Murakami world, where she meets a young luggage maker.

Murakami has also created works for the art market that use his Vuitton designs. Already in 2003, he used acrylic paint for a version of *Eye Love Superflat*, measuring 180 x 180 cm. The canvas was sold in 2010 for \$700,000. In 2004, he added silkscreen editions of the same pattern. Since 2007, pieces of canvas from the handbag production with Murakami patterns have been stretched on regular picture frames, signed by Murakami and sold in editions of 100 copies.

From 2007 to 2009, Murakami's major works were shown in a large retrospective exhibition. With variations due to the physical location and local opportunities, the exhibition was installed at the Museum for Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (2007), the Brooklyn Art Museum (2008), the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt (2008), and the Guggenheim Bilbao (2009). Handbags from the cooperation with *Vuitton* were exhibited in all four of the venues (Figure 4.4).

The translation by the authors—in this case a network connecting the artist Murakami, the members of his workshop and employees of Vuitton—is



Figure 4.4. Vuitton bags with Eye Love Superflat Décor, exhibited at © Murakami, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt, 2008. Photo by the author

clearly recognizable: Patterns created and performed in the art world are translated into patterns suitable for handbags and other fashion accessories, under the stipulation that the original brand appearance remains recognizable. The company sets constraints through the shapes of its signs and objects, the vinylized canvas material and other criteria that ensure cost effectiveness. Some of these features function, at the same time, as indispensable carriers of value in their own right.

Murakami's three variations can be read as paradigmatic specimens of translation: (1) substitution of the color range he has developed as an artist, (2) addition of one of his artistic symbols to the original pattern, (3) substitution of color range, and substitution of one of the four components of the Vuitton pattern for a symbol central to Murakami's oeuvre. The originals of these variations gained their meaning and their first valorization in the world of the visual arts, with its web of cultural references, aesthetic codes and performance practices. The variations and their framing as Vuitton handbags translated them into fashion items. They gained new meaning for those who acquired the Murakami-styled handbags and employed them for their own social statements.

Murakami and Jacobs actively generated dissonance between an artistic logic of value and a commercial logic of value. In the two American venues of his retrospective exhibition, Murakami created a store-like structure. In the store, two kinds of products were on display and sold by sales personnel: Vuitton handbags and trunks with conventional and with Murakami design, and the editions of multiples mentioned above (Figure 4.5).<sup>10</sup> The multiples alone are reported to have generated revenues of \$4 million (Boehm 2009: April 23).

*Vuitton Shop* was framed by the powerful artistic context of the exhibition. Bags and canvases were assembled in the particular arrangement of a "live" shop that, in turn, was part of a "live" museum exhibition of major works by a "live" artist. Commercial transactions took place, and the conversations with the sales girls and the exchange of money units for a bag or a canvas were turned into part of the artistic performance. The observer could experience the shift between economic and aesthetic valuation, always feeling the other valuation as a contextual presence.

In Murakami's own opinion, *Vuitton Shop* was the "heart of the exhibition,"<sup>11</sup> and he called it "my *Fountain*" (Thornton 2008: 212).<sup>12</sup> Thus, he attributed to

<sup>10</sup> The multiples were sold in five patterns, each in an edition of 100. The first fifty items were sold at \$6,000, the second half of the edition sold at \$10,000 per frame. The sales brochure stated that the canvases were "revisited" by Murakami, and that "the original canvases have been hand mounted on a 16 x 16" chassis signed by the artist."

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in a press release of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, published in the Art Newspaper, March 27, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* was a urinal whose shape, tipped sideways, vaguely resembled a traditional mother and child figure. It was rejected from the art show at which it was entered in 1917.



Figure 4.5. Takashi Murakami: *Vuitton Shop*, exhibited at © Murakami, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, 2007. Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd.

the bags and trunks a status comparable to Duchamp's seminal work. This strategy is pointed out by the chief curator of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Paul Schimmel: "Takashi found exactly the point that would irritate both me and Louis Vuitton. He took the materials that he had printed for various [Vuitton] products—the white one, the cherry one, five different sorts of patterns—and he had them stretched like paintings and made into a very large but numbered edition. He is sort of selling this rather high-end multiple up in the Louis Vuitton boutique" (Wilton 2007: November 19).

The difference in logic is used to create a juxtaposition that brims with dissonance. For those consumers engaged in Murakami's creations, this juxtaposition generates fascination. Fascination is a particular, positively valued version of dissonance. In the present case, the mind is attracted by the ambivalence of artistic and commercial value, by the play of oscillations between them. The success of Murakami's work is triggered by a design so carefully balanced that it provokes the fascinated attention of those who seek that kind of experience.

The commercial dimension allows a particular attachment to the products: they can be bought at prices that maximize the seller's revenue for a given limited number of copies sold. The number of those consumers who are able and willing to pay that price is much smaller than the number of those (mostly) women who can "read" the bags and are fascinated by them as well. That difference becomes part of the experience of owning one of

the bags: women carry them at events in their social circles, and they collect comments and gazes by non-owners, as the appreciation of the bags with their singular patterns "rubs off" onto their carriers. This appreciation motivates the monetary value attributed to them.

### *Disney's Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*

*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* premiered in 1937. With 80 minutes of playing time, it was the first full-length animation film in cinematic history. The film was hugely successful in movie theaters around the world. It generated revenues of more than \$8 million on its initial international release, and provided the financial means for the expansion of Disney's entertainment company (Allan 1999). The complexity of creating and producing a feature film led to a series of supporting innovations, like the introduction of story-boards, the direct transfer of drawings to celluloid and a new charge structure for distributors and exhibitors. 1,200 people were involved in producing the 250,000 frames that made up the master copy.

The plan to produce a successful feature animation film was commonly called "Disney's Folly" by the cinema community of the 1930s. It was considered impossible to assemble an animated film that would hold the audience's attention for the length of a feature film, and that would engage them emotionally (Gabler 2006: 213f.).

*Snow White* was one of the fairy-tales in the collection of the Brothers Grimm. The collection, published in countless versions since 1812, inscribed this set of tales into the collective memory of Western civilization. In 1917, Walt Disney had seen a film based on the tale, and it had left a deep impression on him.<sup>13</sup> In the summer of 1935, Disney used an eleven-week vacation in Europe to search for books with potentially usable illustrations for an animated film version of the fairy-tale, which he then sent to the Disney Studio Library.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the books Disney collected, the library contained works by numerous European artists, like the Norwegian Theodor Kittelsen, the German illustrators Hermann Vogel and Ludwig Richter, the English Arthur Rackham and the French Gustave Doré.

Among the chief authors responsible for the visual style of the project in the Disney studio were a number of European or European-trained artists: the Swiss-born and trained Alfred Hurter, who had responsibility for the continuity of style and character; Ferdinand Horvath, trained in Hungary, and Gustav Tenggren, trained in Sweden. All three worked for the film in the newly invented position of "inspirational artists" producing a novel category of sketches in the

<sup>13</sup> The film had been lost by the time Disney began to create *Snow White*. Gabler (2006: 217).

<sup>14</sup> The Disney Studio Library records show entries for 15 titles from Italy, 81 from England, 90 from France, and 149 from Germany. Allan (1999: 31).

## Moments of Valuation

production process which delivered background contexts and determined the visual characteristics of the characters before the animation artists began to draw them in motion (Canemaker 1996; see also Allan 1999: 46–48).

The challenge was to present the figures in such a convincing way that the knowledge of their artificiality was suspended. I will use material on the creation of the two central locations in the film, and on a particularly exciting scene of the film, to demonstrate the two dissonant translations.<sup>15</sup>

At the outset, viewers see the castle where Snow White and her stepmother, the Queen, live (Figure 4.6). The shape of the castle can serve as an example for the complexity of the amalgamation process.

The oldest of the visual sources is a view of the Château de Saumur on the calendar leaf for September in the *Book of Hours* for the Duc de Berry, created by the Limbourg brothers around 1410 (Figure 4.7). The image, in its exaggeration of turrets and pinnacles, became a famous invention.



Figure 4.6. Snow White's castle, Disney Enterprises

<sup>15</sup> The findings are predominantly based on research by Robin Allan (1999). The material available to a broader public was greatly extended through the catalog of an exhibition conceived by Bruno Girveau and Roger Diederer (2008). Allan (2008) condenses his findings in one of the chapters of the catalog.

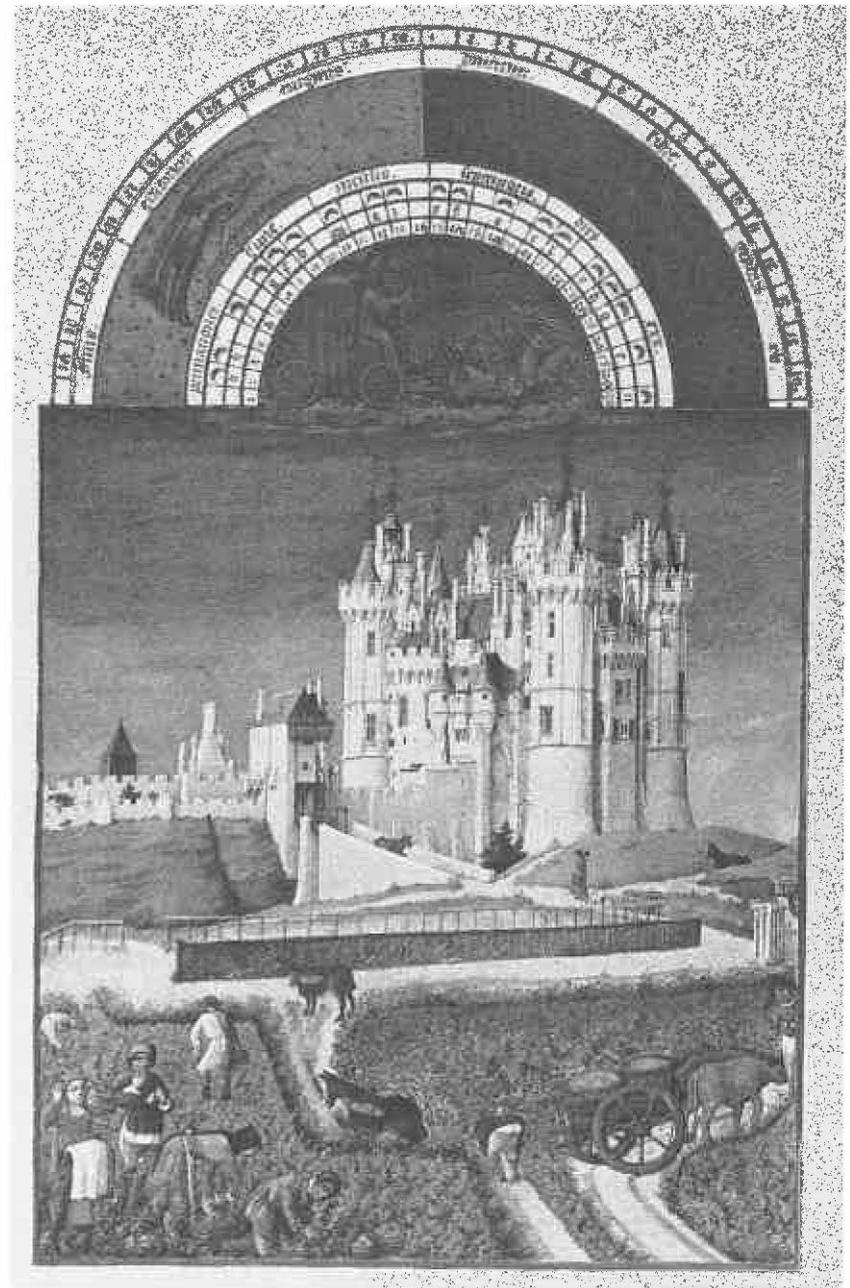


Figure 4.7. Limbourg brothers: *Book of hours* for the Duc de Berry, 1410, Victoria and Albert Museum. In: Allan 1999: 43



Figure 4.8. Alcázar of Segovia. Frank Kovalchek/flickr

The second source is also an invention, although it took the shape of spires on a real building (Figure 4.8). The Alcázar of Segovia was built around 1200, but gained its unique slate spires centuries later. Philip II had them added in 1570 as a reference to the castles in the homeland of his wife, Anna of Austria. They constitute a theatrical gesture rather than an architectural tradition.

The castles commissioned by Louis II of Bavaria were explicitly theatrical. The most successful of them, at least in terms of continuing tourist attraction since the early 20th century, is Schloss Neuschwanstein (Figure 4.9). Images of Neuschwanstein had become part of the collective canon by the 1930s.

The challenge lies in designing a castle that symbolizes political power and architectural craftsmanship, yet is light enough to be considered credible as



Figure 4.9. Schloss Neuschwanstein, colored photography, ca. 1900

the home of a young girl. The dissonance for the authors lies in this balance. The three visual sources just cited reveal that they use theatrical, already symbolic images and versions of real, material castles to come up with their solution. I will comment on the dissonance experienced by the viewers later.

Next, we take a closer look at the passage of Snow White through the forest. The Evil Queen orders her huntsman to kill Snow White in the woods, but he lets her escape. She flees into the dark forest and eventually falls into a deep hole (Figure 4.10).

Those who experience the movie look into a dark world composed of roots that turn into the jaws of an animal, before a background in which bundles of roots look like nerve cells. Such interpretations of the dark world were inspired by Romantic drawing traditions, most prominently by the work of Gustave Doré and Arthur Rackham (Figures 4.11 and 4.12).

For the particular frame that shows Snow White falling, it is possible to compare the earlier artist's sketch (Figure 4.13) with the final version (Figure 4.10). Note how Snow White's skirt became longer, and her legs more puppet-like.

Here, the moment of dissonance for the viewers can be pinpointed. The dissonance occurs in the mind of the viewer, most likely a child or a mother, as part of a larger movie audience. Accompanied by pulsating music, Snow White falls out of her familiar world and is on her way to another world,



Figure 4.10. Snow White falling. Disney Enterprises

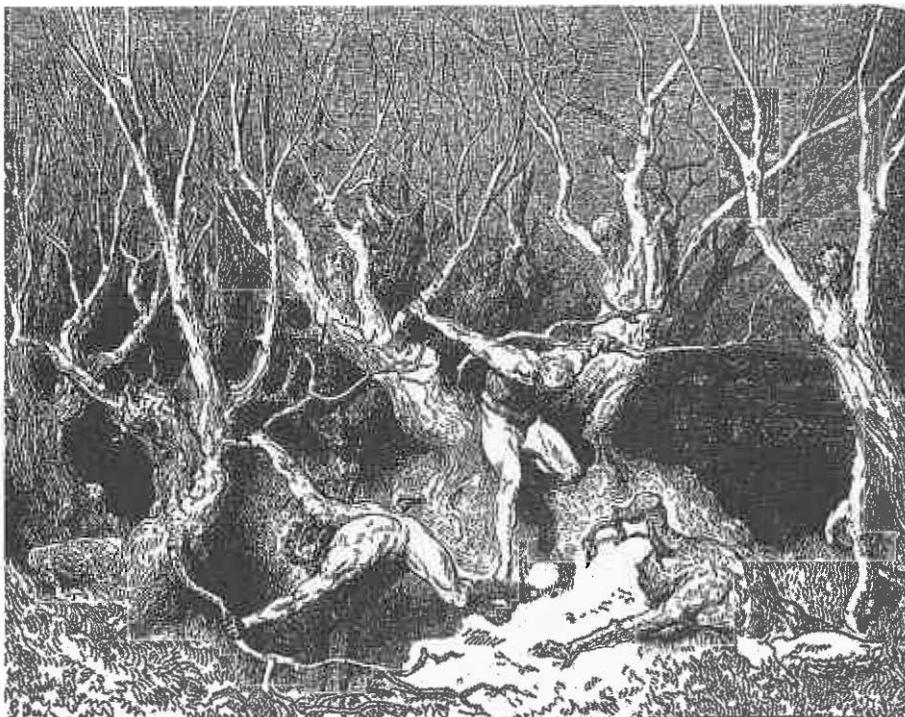


Figure 4.11. Gustave Doré: illustration for Dante's "Inferno," 1861. In: Allan 1999: 50



Figure 4.12. Arthur Rackham: illustration for "A Midsummernight's Dream," 1908. In: Allan 1999: 17

the fairy-tale world. This is the moment where viewers cover or close their eyes, and where it is decided whether they tell others that the novelty is "too much," or "too little." Today, 75 years later, the thrill seems slight, because generations of viewers since then have been exposed to much rougher dissonances. It is also slight because the Disney technique has been, and still is, one that minimizes its extent, and thus increases the number of potential viewers.

After the fall, Snow White lands softly, sings the song *With a smile and a song*, and is led by the animals of the forests to a bucolic glade (Figure 4.14). The colors retain the menacing purple, but the sunrays break through, the brook glitters, white birds spread their wings, and, in the middle, there is the dwarfs' cottage, tiny in scale compared to the surrounding trees.



Figure 4.13. Snow White falling, artist's sketch, 1937. Pastel, 19.2 x 25cm. Walt Disney Animation Research Library, in Girveau and Diederer 2008: 163

The features of the cottage are, again, translations. The documentation from the Animation Research Library shows that the inspirational artists used templates like the fairy-tale illustrations by Ludwig Richter (Figure 4.15),<sup>16</sup> or a photograph of the house of the crazy inventor Rotwang in Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (Figure 4.16).

Similar translations took place in creating the protagonists of the play. I will focus on the dwarfs. They contain the wealth of Disney's own archive of animated figures. Each of them overemphasizes one particular trait—such as bashfulness, hay-fever grumpiness—and turns it into a comical form (Figure 4.17). Their rhetorical characteristics imitate contemporary vaudeville and radio comedians, recognizable to the American audience during the first release.

In the case of the dwarfs, the dissonance between the aesthetic value of the original sources and the "Disney version" is particularly strong. The dwarfs gain their emotional impact by being situated at the borderline between the

<sup>16</sup> The edition of illustrated stories was sold under Richter's name, indicating his reputation as an illustrator.



Figure 4.14. The dwarfs' cottage, Disney Enterprises



Figure 4.15. Ludwig Richter: illustration from "Buch für Kinder und Kinderfreunde," 1853, Girveau and Diederer 2008: 118



Figure 4.16. Fritz Lang: *Metropolis*—Dr. Rotwang's House, film photograph, 1926, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau Stiftung. In: Girveau and Diederer 2008: 66



Figure 4.17. Six of the seven dwarfs, Cel set-up; 54.6 x 90.2cm. Walt Disney Animation Research Library, Girveau and Diederer 2008: 177

animal and human domain. They are miners, working in the bowels of the earth, but they spend their private time above ground, in human-like dwellings, and they behave like humans. In romantic stories and illustrations, their features oscillate between friendly and hostile. The version by Kittelsen, created at the beginning of the century, demonstrates that difference (Figure 4.18).

In the Disney film version, the initially dark and hostile figures are rendered harmless, with an emotional and endearing value. The audience gets

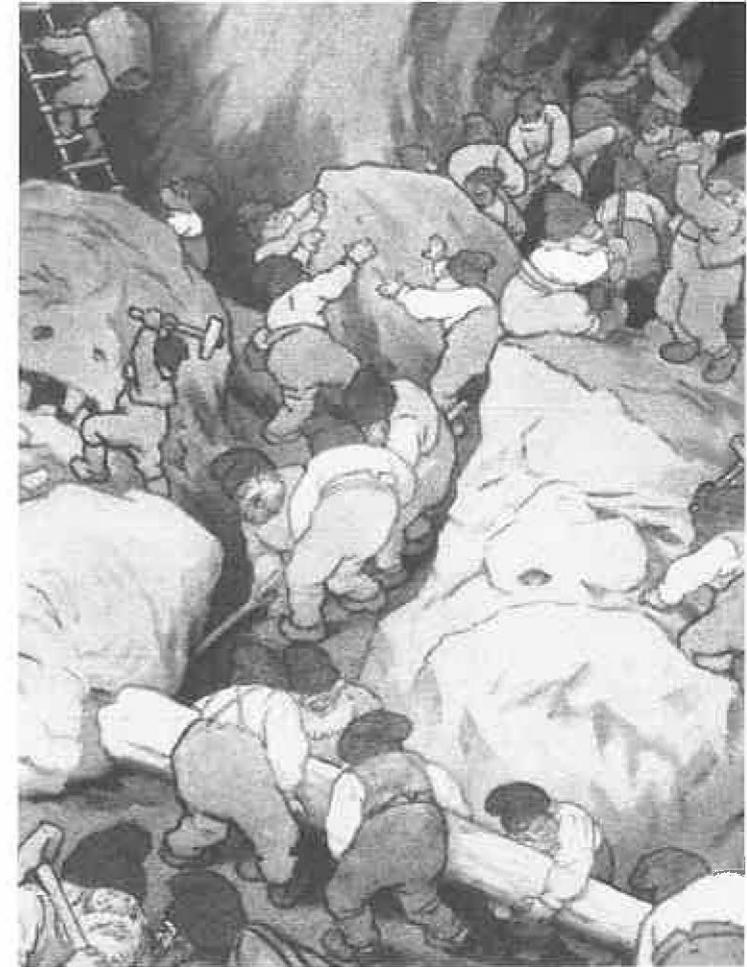


Figure 4.18. Theodor Kittelsen: *The troll mines*, 1907. 44.5 x 33.5 cm. Theodor Kittelsen Museum

engaged in the entertaining, slightly distorting, comically exaggerating motions of the seven dwarfs. Their actions make a much stronger emotional experience bearable: the dissonant drama of danger, suspense and deliverance, witnessed in colored animation, sound and song.

The technique of translating old artistic values, in literature as well as in music and the visual arts, became standard for the films that followed *Snow White*, like *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), *Bambi* (1942), *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). None of them surpassed the landmark success of *Snow White*, but all of them contributed to the growth of a new sector of the creative industries.

*Edward Steichen's Commercial Photography*

Advertising deals with a particular kind of dissonance—the dissonance of promise. An expectation is formed that links an emotionally desirable future state with a tool to attain that state. Imagining a future state of well-being, like having won a lottery or leading a life of affluence, is an attractive experience in itself. Although the experience is pleasant, it generates an emotionally charged difference between the present state of mind and the state once the product is attained. Pleasure is promised once the advertised product is purchased and thus enters the buyer's material world.

To make the promise convincing, producers hire creative agencies to invent visual compositions, to be used in mass-media advertisements. The results are symbolic products—drawings, photographs, short videos—just like those that are offered on entertainment markets. But their functionality is different: they do not contain, rather they promise a valuable experience that is connected to a particular product. The dissonance between artistic source and commercial commodity is therefore sharpened: the artistic features support the advertising image in its emotional effect on the viewer, but that aesthetic effect bears no relation to the biological effect of a hand lotion, to take the example of Steichen's photograph. The result is a continuous debate about seduction and truthfulness in advertising.

Probably the first artistic photographer contracted for advertisements was Edward Steichen.<sup>17</sup> The style of the photos, produced between 1923 and 1936 for a major advertising agency and for fashion magazines, was a major innovation in their field. The images changed advertising photography as well as high fashion photography.

Edward Steichen (1879–1973) had several consecutive artistic careers. He started as an avant-garde painter and photographer in the Pictorialist style. Pictorialists favored vague outlines, tonal contrasts and symbolic content. His first exhibition in London in 1900, at the age of 21, was called a “bombshell” (Haskell 2000: 21). After 1908, Steichen became successful as an artistic photographer in the modernist style, with clear tonal values and stark contrasts (Rexer 2001). Steichen's works were promoted in *Gallery 291* and published in the magazine *Camera Work*. Alfred Stieglitz called Steichen “the greatest photographer . . . that ever lived” (Becker 1982: 341). In 1923, Steichen started a further career when he signed a contract with *Condé Nast Publishing* to deliver, as “chief photographer,” monthly fashion and socialite photographs to be published in *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*. Also in 1923, he signed a contract with the *Walter Thompson Agency*, a major advertising firm (Simon 1998: 105). After establishing a further reputation as America's leading commercial

<sup>17</sup> Before Steichen, the usual technique for advertising images was sketches and drawings.

photographer, he terminated his contracts in 1936. From 1947 until 1962, he curated the photography section of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The images Steichen produced with his studio during his second career made use of emotional codes developed in symbolist painting. They introduced new techniques of lighting and they positioned the single frames of advertising photographs into fictional stories. The images chosen for demonstration are selected from an advertising campaign for Jergens Lotion.

The Thompson Agency handled the account for the Jergens Company since 1922. The lotion had been a locally successful brand and was to be launched into a nationally marketed brand (Johnston 1997). The agency was committed to modernist style, a look that stood for a practical, young, realistic attitude (Simon 1998: 106).<sup>18</sup> Steichen's style of “straight photography” was paradigmatic for the Thompson approach. In addition, the agency employed behavioral psychologists to “tap into women's supposedly instinctive motivations” (Simon 1998: 107). It wanted the most powerful visual statement for their product, and Steichen used his capacities and skills to produce such statements at the rate of dozens per month over a period of thirteen years.

The photograph in Figure 4.19 is part of a full-page advertisement for Jergens Lotion. It is positioned in the upper half of the page, framed with a passe-partout. The signature “Steichen” appears on the right side of the lower rim—a form of presentation common in high art. Contrast and lighting are employed to convey the message. While the image appears to be a straightforward representation of a mundane action, it contains an element of fiction—the hands kneading dough are flawless. The flawlessness seduces the spectator. The hands belong to another social world, to a lifestyle in which they are meant to lift opera-glasses rather than buckets. The dissonance generates “apprehensions and allurements” (Simon 1998). In the surrounding text, the beneficial effects of applying *Jergens Lotion* are explained. The feeling of tension can be relieved by buying and applying the lotion in the carefully designed bottle, shown in the lower right corner of the advertisement.

The Jergens campaign was continued until 1936, with a constant flow of new photographs. Later advertisements situate the hands in positions of luxury (Figure 4.1). In Steichen's photograph, the advertised product has crossed the border between the fictional and the material, between the fantastic and the real. The image tips the emotion from desire to (trans-)action. The soft hands in the dough and next to the bottle are at the epicenter of these highly dissonant compositions.

Steichen's fashion photos in *Vogue* and his portraits of celebrities in *Vanity Fair* are similar in construction and effect. The women or men are positioned

<sup>18</sup> “. . . advertising agencies came to perceive photography as a truly American medium in its modernity: It suggested newness, novelty, industry, efficiency.”



Figure 4.19. Walter Thompson Agency: advertisement for *Jergens Lotion* with Edward Steichen: hands kneading dough, in: *Ladies' Home Journal*, Jan. 1925. In: Johnston 1997: 46

in ways that bring out the best in the surfaces photographed. There is no attempt to expose deeper layers of the subject. The goal is to sell a seasonal line of dresses, or to bolster the reputation of an artist or a socialite. The goal is commercial, which imposes constraints on the choice of subject matter and technique of execution, but the image is created according to Steichen's criteria of artistic validity (Haskell 2000).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Steichen was very vocal in advocating this argument. In exhibitions of his works, he insisted on showing the photographs from advertising campaigns together with works that were produced solely for appreciation in his art world.



Figure 4.20. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres: *Princesse de Broglie*, 1853, Musée du Louvre, Paris

Steichen had lived in Paris for many years, and there he gained detailed knowledge of the European painting tradition. As a critic observes, Steichen's photographs "use the formal potential of great paintings... By consciously or unconsciously drawing on a vast repertoire of tried and tested portrait types—in his own inner Louvre, you might say—trained painter Steichen removed the existing constraints on the genre of 'beauty pictures'" (Bezzola 2008: 194).<sup>20</sup> For example, the skill of Ingres in painting hands was a model for Steichen's presentations of hands (Figure 4.20).

<sup>20</sup> The painters most often mentioned in the literature on Steichen are Parmigianino, Ingres, Whistler, Manet, and Degas.

Steichen's "inner Louvre" was not limited to Old Masters. Pictorialist photography, which he had practiced in his youth, shared the aesthetic goal of conveying meaning behind the image with the much wider symbolist movement. Symbolist painters extracted elements of mythology and of dream imagery as a visual language for the world of the soul. Such imagery found its way into compositions like the one in Figure 4.1.

Steichen's ingenuity of turning visual experiences into novel works did not stop with translations from the world of images around him. He ran a studio with dozens of assistants, and the range of experimentation in the studio extended to the complete sequence of practices in developing photographic prints. All material factors, from lenses to papers and from lighting sources to chemicals, were tested. Eventually, these practices became standard for commercial photographers. Steichen shaped commercial photography for decades, and inspired fashion photographers like Cecil Beaton, Richard Avedon, Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin (Bezzola 2008).

In the art world, Steichen's works, including his commercial photographs, enjoy a solid and growing recognition. Originals achieve high prices at auctions, and they are present in all the major public collections of photographic art. Many of the works continue to be reproduced in catalogs and in books that assemble iconic photographs.

### Linking Social Worlds Through Dissonant Translations

In the introduction to this chapter, I claimed that translations of value from already existing artistic sources to new creative products take place under conditions of dissonance, for the network of creators as well as for their audiences—networks of readers, viewers and listeners. Did the presentations of three products from different branches of the creative industries show traces of such dissonant translations?

The readers experience the products in the three cases mainly as viewers—they read, or decode, advertisements, of films and of handbags. Their viewing experience involved valuations—the expected benefits from displaying beautiful hands, the thrill of following a heroine through her adventures, the gratification from wearing an exclusively stylish handbag. What kinds of dissonance experienced by the consumers could be detected? In Steichen's photos, the readers feel the incongruity between their present physical state and the potential future state symbolized in the image. The visualized situations in Disney's films allow readers/viewers to suspend their disbelief that animated drawings could ever be truthful representations of persons with a rich inner life. The handbags branded by Murakami and Vuitton permit their owners to distinguish themselves from those without such trophies.

In sum, the translations of value in the three cases cross different boundaries: the boundaries between present and future, between reality and fantasy, and between privileged inside and unprivileged outside. The readers/users/viewers contribute to the values themselves as they imagine certain futures, or certain miracles, or certain kinds of prominence. For them, valorization and the reflection of that valorization in value judgments and purchases flow into one.

The networks of authors in the three cases are dominated by famous individuals, but a closer look reveals more complex arrangements. Steichen was surrounded by a professional studio, his photos were processed by a major advertising firm and distributed in a national journal's outlets. Disney depended on hundreds of collaborators, from the inspirational artists down to the colorists of the individual frames. He also depended on risk-tolerant banks and on a competent distribution network. Murakami employed up to a hundred young artists in the 2000s (Favell 2011: 54). The collaboration with Vuitton made the manufacturing and sales resources of a globally active enterprise accessible.

The translation from original artistic values into a novel product followed different strategies. Steichen taught his team how to display the surfaces of soaps, towels and socialites as symbolic surfaces, based on compositions invented by masterly painters mostly of the 19th century. Disney hired artists with European classical training, exposed them to images from the Romantic period and coached them in drawing new kinds of personages understood by American children. Murakami sold his artistic reputation, delivered a commissioned set of designs for accessories, and participated in the promotion campaigns for their sale.

In each of the cases, the strategies chosen were publicly contested. Steichen had to defend his commercial engagements, Disney became proverbial for the infantilization of cultural heritage, and Murakami is still not taken seriously in conservative art circles. The heated debates document that crossing the boundary from the artistic to the commercial world of worth inevitably generates dissonance. The creators valorized their new products by linking their symbolic content to the content of artistic sources, and the readers found that linkage meaningful, even exciting.

It seems, then, that the notion of dissonant translation does have empirical content. If that is the case, then it can be employed to broaden the scope of larger theories explaining social change. Such theories are basically structural. They model the social world in terms of fields of action, or plays of meaning, or systems of communication. Fields, plays and systems differ in their practices, their semantics and their grammars of worth. But how can processes of mutual influence between such worlds of worth be modeled if the actors involved in each single interaction cannot be taken into account?

One response to this question is to interpret the process as irritation: changes in the environment of a field of action are not understood in the way knowledge is transmitted, but interpreted as disturbances or attractions that make no sense in the other field, yet lead to new ideas and formulations. As in biological evolution, such irritations might trigger variations and mutations. Another response assumes that reactions of critique lead to attempts of change and compromise.<sup>21</sup>

The approach involving dissonant translations recognizes the structural differences between fields of action, and yet introduces processes between and within agents that transcend these differences: a symbolic form that has prior meaning in the artistic world passes through groups or teams of authors and gains meaning in the commercial world, through the demand of audiences of readers that are able to read and experience the form, and to pay its price. Actors are included in their capacity as communication-processing agents: first as code writers, or creators, then as code readers, or experiencers. Both modes of agency can be active in a single actor.

Dissonance seems to contradict translation because meaning is interrupted twice, by authors and by readers. But in fact, dissonance opens the wide scope of new variations and new interpretations that generate new value. The dissonant translations discussed in this chapter, from the grammar of an artistic expression to the commercial grammar of a product worth paying for, represent only one aspect of the much wider applicability of the concept to all the other boundaries between worlds of worth. But they are sufficient to explain how economic growth can be driven by largely immaterial symbolic value, contained in creative products.

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<sup>21</sup> See Luhmann (2013) for the first, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) for the second approach.

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## 5

### Evaluating Valuation: Connoisseurship, Technology, and Art Attribution in an American Court of Law

*John Brewer*

In the Spring of 1929, towards the end of a boom that was shortly to be followed by a spectacular bust, the sidewalks outside New York's State Supreme Court were crowded with people waiting to attend the trial of *Hahn versus Duveen*. The world press was also in attendance: the trial was to be reported throughout the United States and Europe—notably in Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Yet this was no sensational case of fraud, bank-robbery or serial killing, but a dispute over a single painting, a work that its owners, Harry and Andree Hahn, claimed to be a Leonardo da Vinci, and that the powerful Old Master art market dealer, Sir Joseph Duveen, dismissed as a copy of a picture in the Louvre known as *La Belle Ferroniere* (see Figure 5.1). Mrs. Hahn was suing Duveen in the New York courts for “slander of title” (disparaging her goods) claiming compensation to the sum of \$250,000 because Duveen had dismissed her picture in a New York newspaper and therefore, she claimed, made it impossible to sell. Public fascination at the trial and the newspaper coverage that accompanied it were part of a long-standing preoccupation with the burgeoning Old Master art market as a symbol for the wealth generation, riches and power of the new American plutocracy; but the conflict itself was framed as “the battle of the experts,” a struggle over the evaluation of a work of art, that would have profound effects on its market value. A court—a judge and a panel of jurors—were being asked to make a legal determination that depended upon an aesthetic judgment that, in turn, would have profound economic consequences. But, as all the litigants and the public knew, this was not merely a case about the authenticity of a particular work of art, but about different regimes of truth