

What Constitutes an Exhibition-in-Print?

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The constituents of an exhibition evolve as the culture-at-large and art cultures shift in relation to each other. These constituents are unstable. In the last several decades for example, we have seen the definition of site-specific artwork and relational aesthetics change in relationship with viewer subjectivity and an artwork's autonomy. As a result, we must evaluate the essentials of an exhibition and consider what the contemporary understanding of a "print" can be. Only then can we ascertain the autonomy, authenticity and agency of an exhibition-in-print as it relates to material and physical artworks or hyperreal works as understood in the Internet-based exhibition, *In Anticipation*.

To simplify, an exhibition is that which shows or demonstrates. It can be a traditional museum show of two-dimensional works, a spectacle such as fireworks, a carnival or a performance. An exhibition may also be an advertisement for artists, artworks, businesses or a community, such as the Taipei and Miami Biennials. Capital culture not only provides space for exhibitions to be advertisements, but also for advertisements to exist as exhibitions. That which once existed as a printed advertisement may now be read as an artwork and exhibited as such. We see this in Linda Benglis's notorious ad in *Artforum* (1974) to promote her then upcoming exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York City. This was nothing new. Toulouse Lautrec designed the lithograph *Moulin Rouge-La Goulue* (1891) as a poster to sell tickets to the *Moulin Rouge*, Paris.

In these last decades, the term "print" has changed, too. An artist's print is no longer a monotype, or even a monoprint. *Giclees* and mylar transfers blur the boundaries between the artist's hand and machine. Photo-mechanical reproductions, whether in large quantities or small, on a home printer or at a print-house, are colloquially understood to be prints.

In order to distinguish among these variances and to ascertain what constitutes an exhibition-in-print, we need to consider the specificities of the exhibition itself, including the artist's and curator's intentions and whether or not there exists a traditional gallery exhibition. Often an exhibition-in-print implies a relationship between the printed matter and a material, physical exhibition, as in a catalog that refers artworks in a gallery space, or even a hyperreal exhibition, such as exists for *In Anticipation* on the Internet.

On the other hand, printed media can be an autonomous exhibition site. In either case, the printed images may be endowed with authenticity – perhaps they are designed by the participating artist(s) as is the case with *In Anticipation* and Benglis's ad.

Despite mass production, these printed images not only are authentic to an artist's vision but they possess their own agency. The prints function as their own show. They no longer need be tethered to a material gallery or to a hyperreal, Internet exhibition. A similar trend is the emphasis on ephemera, including how shows are produced, or the remains after an event of relational aesthetics, such as the dirty dishes that stay on display in Rikrit Tiravanija's seminal *Pad Thai* (1991-1996). The understanding of exhibition has radically changed in recent decades.

Following this logic and these trends, an exhibition-in-print can be posters, may perform advertising, might exist solely in a magazine or be shown in countless other forms.

Curatorial statements, although often a potent viewer's aid, are not a necessary component of these various types of exhibitions-in-print. This is often the artist's decision and is related to the images themselves, their autonomy, the artist's mission and the location of the printed exhibition. The function of the work may be contained wholly within the image and the presentation, as we saw in the pre-election Barack Obama images by Shephard Fairey from 2008. In this way the exhibition-in-print, once being solely referential to material art objects and nearly synonymous with the simulacrum, gains some autonomy.

An exhibition-in-print is inherently something different than a material exhibition. The printed exhibition intersects with the functions of all print media, from monoprint to mass advertising. Responding to the expanding definition of an exhibition-in-print forces us to rub up against the distressingly reductive question of advertising versus fine art, a question now understood to be compelled by the problematics of capitalism in a post-industrial, global society. What constitutes an exhibition-in-print, then, is in large part determined by the artists and sometimes the curators. The questions we, and they, must consider are how the exhibition-in-print functions, who the intended audience is and in what locales, and lastly, if the images are authentic and autonomous.