

room. Their vibrant surfaces, with obsessively drawn patches of color, create an almost feverish effect. At the same time, the chosen subjects, as well as the specific angles, evoke the gaze of a camera – *Panorama 1* and *Living Room: Panorama 2* (2014) observe the room through an extremely wide lens, while the works *Window* and *Wall* (both 2014) focus on specific details, including a beautifully sharp pencilling of light on a wall. A culturally imbued gaze on one's own surroundings. A gaze filtered through the flow of images and information, a gaze that can no longer be separated from one's own thoughts.

(Text by Neringa Cerniauskaite)

5. The Contract

ESSEX STREET
114 Eldridge St, New York, NY 10002, United States
essexstreet.biz

As this past month the auction market just had the two biggest weeks in art history¹, and collectors (investors, perhaps) bought more than \$2 billion of art, it might be time to step back and reconsider some variables of the contemporary art equation.

At a very different time in 1971, the visionary dealer and conceptual art promoter Seth Siegelaub drafted “The Artist’s Reserved Transfer and Sale Agreement”, together with the lawyer Robert Projansky. Siegelaub was a member of the Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC), the main convergence of social and critical activism by artists in that period.

The contract gets signed by the artist and the collector at the time of purchase and guarantees reproduction and conservation rights. It requires the artist’s permission in order to display a work in a show and the splitting of any museum loan fee provided. In addition, the contract states a resale right, which guarantees a 15% fee to the artist every time the property of the work is transferred. This royalty fee exists in Europe since 2001 thanks to the Resale Right Directive and was introduced in California in the late 1970s, while it has never been adopted in the rest of the US.

As described by Roberta Smith in a *New York Times* article from May 31, 1987, one of the few artists to start using this contract was Hans Haacke. He is one of the main exponents of Institutional Critique, and his work overtly addresses social and political issues within the art system. One of Haacke’s works, *On Social Grease*, 1975, was sold at a Christie’s auction in New York in 1987. To the bewilderment of the auction house, it provoked a heated escalation of bidders vying for it, despite the 15% extra charge. Daniel Buren uses the contract without the resale clause, while Jackie Windsor used it only at the beginning of her career, to make sure people would take good care of her works. Other artists like Carl Andre and Edward Kienholz have similar agreements.

Fast-forwarding to 2014, Hans Haacke is now the only artist still using the Siegelaub contract. There have been some other developments over the years, like the Visual Artists Rights Act, a federal law passed in 1990 which guarantees copyright and moral rights to work’s authors. But despite the soaring values reached at recent auctions, no attempt has been made to let artists participate in the economic life of a work after they no longer own it.

Essex Street is undertaking this task with the group exhibition “The Contract”, which explicitly refers to the Seth Siegelaub agreement. The latter will be freely distributed at the gallery and required for all the works for sale in the show. None of the selected works directly allude to the contract, but they all deal with relevant themes, challenging the art

system and its formats, copyright and authorship. Among the artists selected is Maria Eichhorn, who has been working on Siegelaub’s contract since 1996; she is most famous for *Public Limited Company* at Documenta 11 in Kassel (2002), a corporation whose peculiarity was the lack of capital growth. Her work in the show, *Paperbag*, 2008/2014, is a Data Quest paper bag filled with containers from the gallerist’s purchases over the last two months.

In R.H. Quaytman’s painting, the relationship between artist and collector is challenged: *Ark, Chapter 10 (Still from A. Fraser “Untitled”) #2*, 2008-2013, immortalizes the bed where the artist Andrea Fraser performed a sexual encounter with a collector who paid \$20,000 to participate in the performance in 2003.

Other artists in the show question the status of an object. Cameron Rowland’s *49-51 Chamber Street - Basement*, New York NY 10007, 2014 is a circular wooden table the artist acquired at a public surplus auction where all the unclaimed furniture in the formerly public building was sold. The table belonged to the Mayor’s office and, like the building, was sold in order to comply with budget cuts. The shift from public to private, and the furniture’s transformation into an “unusable”, used readymade, question how the status of an object is determined.

Park McArthur’s black rectangular block was the artist’s self-made computer from 2008 to 2013. Every single image, email or file created by McArthur during those six years is contained inside. There is no back-up copy and the material is accessible, which leaves the artist in a state of vulnerability, as noted in the title *Social Security*, 2014.

Roberta Smith suggests in her 1987 article, used as a press release for the show, that in the middle of the Eighties boom, when artists were more successful and gained more economic power than before, times could have been ripe for a return of the contract, or at least of the ideas behind it. The hope that what did not happen in 1987 might unexpectedly materialize in 2014 has a bittersweet taste.

1 Kelly Crow, “Art Selling Like Hot Cakes in New York Auctions”, The Wall Street Journal online, Nov 13, 2014

(Text by Elena Tavecchia)

6. Kai Althoff

MICHAEL WERNER GALLERY
22 Upper Brook St, London W1K 7PZ,
United Kingdom
michaelwerner.com

The improbable pairing of Spirituality and Adornment is at the center of Kai Althoff’s first exhibition in the London gallery of Michael Werner. While there are plenty of historical precedents where the two have been deployed in the name of a common cause, chief among them the Baroque, it is true that in a contemporary context, the assumption that Spirituality can only be successful at the expense of Adornment or vice versa is a difficult one to shake when it comes to more traditional media like painting, sculpture and drawing. Althoff’s stance that Spirituality and Adornment are not enemies, but allies in their quest to make a better world, or, in his words, “to make life bearable”, is here expressed through a new body of work defined by a dark tone that seems to permeate the whole exhibition. With the exception of two paintings in the first room, the rest of the works are arranged as a total installation embracing the larger space, where visitors are invited to expand their interaction by sitting on chairs or

