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PRODUCTION

CONTRIBUTORS

P. GOMEZ & DANIEL CRUDE
SARAH BECK
TOUGH GUY MOUNTAIN

ON THE COVER

JUSTIN TYLER TATE

Event Horizon (2012)
Re-purposed & scrap wood, 1,100 screws, 5 days. Photograph by Didzis Grosz.

Interested in submitting a cover image?
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LICENSING

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SOUND OFF

Have a question, suggestion or random fact that you'd like to share?

Even the NSA can't figure it out.

STUFF NOBODY READS

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For general inquires you can reach us at:

**44 Hedges Boulevard,
Toronto, Ontario
M9B 3C4
Canada**

or by e-mail at

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

A BRAND IS A BRAND IS A BRAND IS A BRAND

Good business is the best art. Warhol said that. The selections in this month's issue are in a debate with and against the artist—or the celebrity. It can sometimes be impossible to tell the difference. The corporate model has bled into the art industry, perhaps thanks to Campbell's and Brillo, but the emulation of the corporate model isn't merely a market interest. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and **Young Incorporated Artists** don't like the word critique.

A brand is a brand is a brand is a brand. That doesn't mean it can't sell for millions at a Sotheby's auction. The texts that follow interrogate market value, and by that we mean the value of the market.

P. Gomez and Daniel Crude have a conversation inspired by **Friday Nights at the ROM**. When it's a party the word "night" gets a capital. The cultural institution as nightclub may be a cash ploy, but it could just as easily be an image thing. If the artist can do it, so can the museum. Gomez and Crude provide a critical take on the marketability of Culture from within the institution (at parties the word "culture" also gets a capital).

Benjamin Button is not a fiction, it's a business strategy. Hire a DJ, bring the youth and the old becomes new. It works for meat hangars and museums alike. The denouncement of ticket charge, cover charge and the ease of exchanging one for the other is really just a critique of hipsters. The ROM is not supposed to be that trendy. Gomez and Crude argue this with one eye on "the scene" and one eye on antiquated precedents.

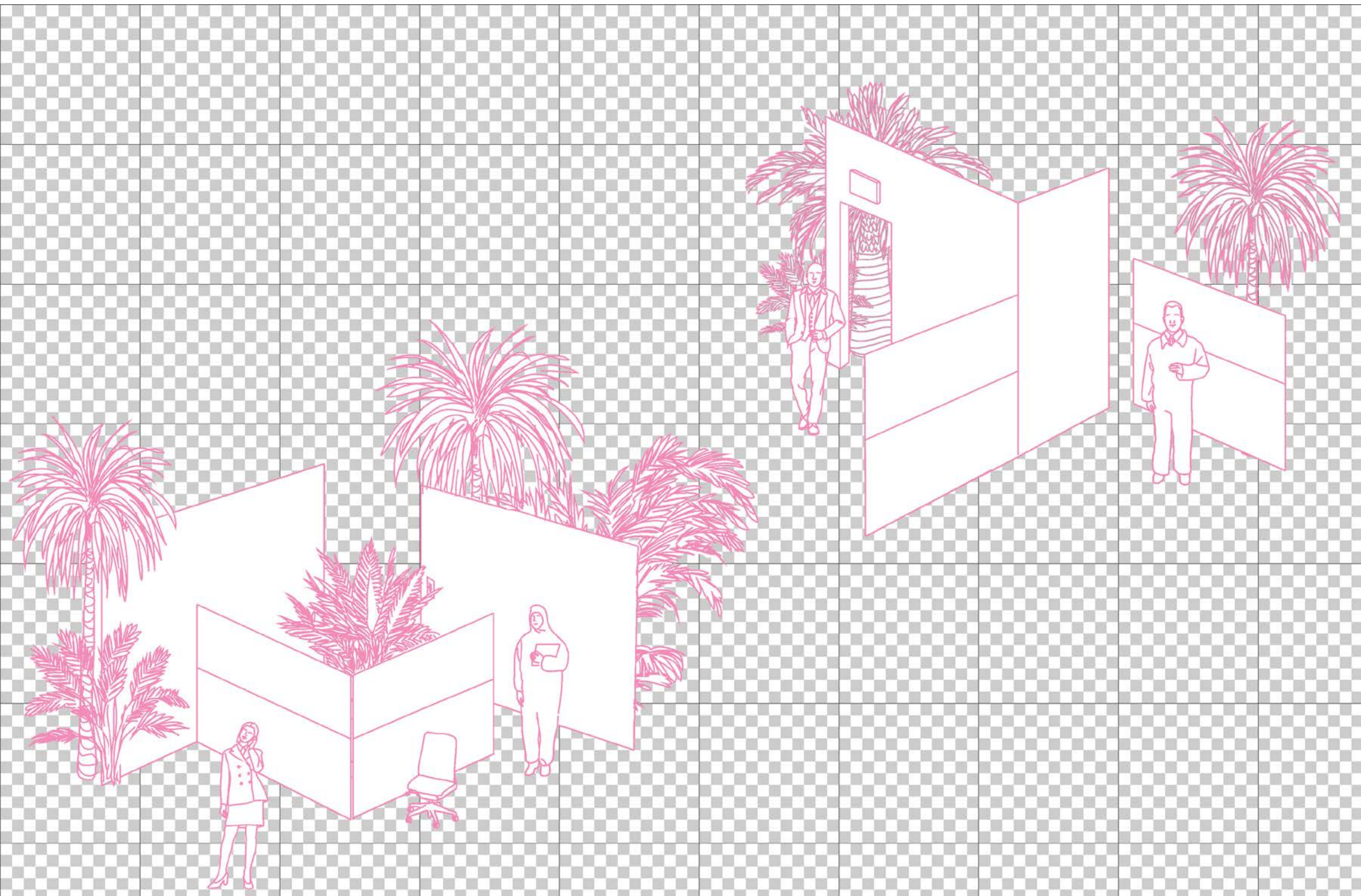
Brillo packages cost $2.99.
A Warhol Brillo box costs $350,000.
A brand is a brand is a brand is a brand, but this is all in theory. In an excerpt from her novel, Sarah Beck discusses economic disparity between brands of different distinction. Let's play a game: what do these things have in common? Brillo, Damien Hirst, Louis Vuitton, Apple Jacks and kidneys. We would say usefulness if not for the second item.

Distinctions between appropriation and forgery determine desirability. There will always be a market for the concept of Real Stuff™. That means business is all smoke and mirrors. Beck deconstructs the spectacle and highlights the illusions. Content before brand is outdated, just like new before old. Selling product is a dying business. Selling credentials is where the money is. We are certified partners of Culture—if you want to buy in, go to the ROM on a Friday night.

Beck lays a red brick road (*red is the most saleable*) to the Brandscape. Here the members of Tough Guy Mountain are interviewed by a person who once bought a fake Chanel purse and never wore it. TGM functions as a fake company and a real company. No need for an authentication board when the blurry line between appropriation and forgery functions as part of the brand. Content-free isn't the fine print, it's an advertised feature.

The interview offers an insider perspective of the Young Incorporated Artist. The girls in high heels and the guys in dress shirts are as important as the investment banker. They are all part of the audience. What audience? The wealthy are in the nosebleed seats. TGM are in the business of performance or the performance of business. We can't decide. It is still impossible to tell the difference. Regardless, the brand show must go on. Donations are accepted. Tip your waiters.

The theme seems kind of ironic all of a sudden.



ROMcom

MEATPACKING AT THE MUSEUM

P. Gomez and Daniel Crude

***Stats and numbers might be completely off, we just used them as examples*

P. Gomez: What do you think of the following thing:
I am torn about it, as I am about 100% of things
The Royal Ontario museum, ROM, or that jagged crystal looking building in Toronto, added a new event to its regular programming, that museums across the US and UK have been implementing for a while
Every Friday, the museum opens its doors to the young crowd
Where they play music, sell alcohol, food, bands play, people dance, and look at dinosaurs
I don't like it

Daniel Crude: I hate it. On every level.

P: It's attracting 5000+ weekly

D: Because it's a party

P: Yes
Each person pays $12
So with VIP bullshit and this and that

D: A nightclub attracts 5000 people weekly
Each person pays $12

P: Maybe they make profit of $10,000 weekly

D: Well, probably not

P: For working, alcohol, security, and all other expenses

D: I mean, it's still a museum
Costs of running things is a bit higher than a nightclub

P: Costs are one thing. Museums don't make their money from people dancing in them

D: I presume they are doing this because no one's going to the museum and they are under pressure to boost visitorship. Museums don't make money, period.

P: They get 30% from the government, 30% from ticket sales, 20% donations, 10% merchandise

D: This is a desperation plea, I guess.
I don't know, I won't be going, so I don't need to see those people, so that's all I care about.

P: I know
I won't either
But every Friday, long, long winding line ups at 7 PM in front of the museum. With girls in heels and guys in dress shirts
It's bizzare. Bizarre.

D: Anyway, Monsieur Tallen is holding some sort of benefit art show this weekend or the next
And Marilyn has a piece in it
That I helped with, I guess

P: I am not done!
But fine
What is this piece?

D: No, go on

P: No, I just wanted to talk about it more

D: Behind this museum marketing ploy is a the sinister aspect of everything
I mean that

P: Explain
Even something as time and the past is commodified?

D: It was estimated sometime in the sixties that people between the ages of 16 and 35 made up more than 80% of economic consumption. In every single niche of retail and advertising. It then became a formalised moment to gear advertisement and marketing towards young people
And then it all tumbled to shit
Because simply by nature of youth
Young people are stupid
And when you gear more than 80% of everything towards them
The infatilization of the nation kicked off in full gear
And by now, predictably, it has gained grotesque proportions
hence

P: I remember teaching that in class, and using Wal-Mart selling studded punk bracelets as an example for $3.99

D: Some drunken idiot frat boy in a French cuff shirt stained with grenadine will stare at a dinosaur and nudge his buddy and say
Cool, dude
It's a fucking museum
They're boring sure, but this really isn't the way

P: I agree, yes

D: For a while, advertisement gurus explained this by ancient Greek philosophy and how youth was deified and preserved
But ancient Greeks deified beauty, not youth, that argument got mangled somewhere there

P: But people are going crazy over this hot new programming, and I guess it works perfectly for the hipster generation
Because
It's one thing to go to a night club, called transit sexy, or whatever
Or go to the museum
You're the same person, and you're doing the same thing
Cultural value and the suggestion of intelligence, and of course, the non-standard and strange
And bringing the old into the new (hipsters)

D: The neighborhood in New York where most gays and trannies congregate to drink like mad people is called the meatpacking district
It's one of the most popular drinking destinations for young people in New York City.
Do you know why it's called the meatpacking district?

P: I can get ideas
Go on

D: Well no
That's the point
It's called the meatpacking district because in the 20's, it was a meatpacking district
It was hangars for meat cutting
The industry
Then that industry died off
And the empty hangars got repossessed into giant nightclub and rave formations
So in the 80's, it became popular to drink in hangars and sheds
In the 90's, open fields apparently
Something else in the 2000's probably
Now, museums, other things will pop up
It will pass
Young people are stupid, but also fickle

P: Yes, sure

D: This hell will pass
Make way for a new one

P: I am not concerned about its longevity
Or very interested in it
It's the phenomenon now
And yes, you said it well- museums are boring
But now they also feel like sell outs
At least the museum has always been traditional and dignified, right?

D: Yes
It was a place to come and get a certain experience
A well-established historical experience
Not anymore in this one
And the older, more affluent people they will

alienate doing this for some passing attention from some young morons
Will likely put a dent in their donations
And result in longer term issues
Because patronage weathers the bad times
But when they leave, they fucking leave
Young people flap in the wind
And care not

P: Well, then i guess they will continue attempting to attract the young

D: Well then, by my calculations, they will soon move out art and exhibits to make room for more young people paying cover

P: I don't know, I feel the rom should become a non-for-profit charity organization and not charge $20 to visit, because it's really not THAT spectacular

D: More space means more heads means more money

P: And just do what museums in Europe do

D: And in ten years, it will be a nightclub that used to be a museum

P: Which is maybe more sinister

D: Hipsters love to do things in places that used to be other places
Hi, this restaurant used to be an ancient Indian burial ground
Hi, this organic farm used to be a rec centre

P: Ahaha we're both talking about our own thing.. Over each other

D: Hi, this summer camp used to be a concentration camp

P: Did you catch that?

D: We usually do once we get going
I still read and retain what you say
And we agree with each other and boost each other's points

P. Gomez and Daniel Crude

are the pseudonyms of a couple—a writer and an artist. Their work is published in a number of journals, and exhibited locally and internationally. Currently residing in Mexico City, they are working on their first collaborative project, the co-authored work *What is wrong with today's art and how it will likely not be fixed*. Originally from Europe (but not exclusively the EU), Gomez and Crude are planning to return and continue working on their independent and collaborative projects. Gomez is currently collecting 5 sentence bios from strangers for a work in progress—if interested in contributing, anonymously or otherwise, please contact:

And now

A TEACHABLE MOMENT

brought to you by

KAPSULA

The "T" word

In the previous article, the word "trannies" appears. While the nature of that article is conversational, and the use of the word should be considered within the context of a casual exchange between partners, KAPSULA would like to take a moment to acknowledge and address the sociopolitical implications of the "t" word, and, perhaps, inform those who may not be aware of the lively discourse on this issue.

"Tranny" is defined as a generally pejorative slang term to describe a **transvestite**, **transsexual** or **transgender** individual. The etymology of the word dates back to the 1960s in the United Kingdom, when it was used in a chiefly derogatory manner. Today, the word, though historically defamatory, is largely recognized as being stereotypical, dated and sometimes appears ironically, particularly when being 're-claimed' by a member of the trans community. However, these are often the views expressed by **cisgender** individuals living in a cis-privileged society versus those writing from a trans perspective whom often have disputed use of the word entirely, claiming that it connotes **"a history of violence, oppression, anger, and hate."**

Since the early 2000s, the word has gained a more 'spectacular' status and moved into the parlance of mainstream media, most notably in reality TV series such as *Project Runway* and *Ru Paul's Drag Race*—both of which came under criticism for their frequent inclusion of the term.

2008 *Project Runway* winner, Christian Siriano, was a 'trendsetter' with his nonchalant and questionable catch phrase, "hot tranny mess." He and the popularity of his idiom became the inspiration for a short but poignant rant by **Margaret Price for *Bitch Magazine*** about the inconvenient truth that the trans community is still anything but socially accepted and the shockingly high rate of violent crime against transgendered individuals. According to **a 2012 report by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs**, 53% of all homicides against the LGBTQ community and a startling 20% of all violent crimes in the United States are targeted at transgender individuals—a demographic that makes up less than 5% of that country's total population.

Siriano eventually apologized, **Ru Paul sort of did**, but both have been far from alone in coming under public scrutiny for flippantly throwing around the "t" word or its synonyms. 2011 saw a streak of otherwise outwardly progressive celebrities make off-the-cuff remarks including the "t" word. **Lance Bass** wrote a public apology published through the *Huffington Post*—which if not redeemable for any other reason at this point, has been a long proponent of giving more and more coverage to LGBTQ issues. In an open letter published through **GLAAD**, **Kelly Osbourne also apologized** that year for comments she made about a transgendered friend, and **Neil Patrick Harris** issued a short but hopefully sincere apology on his Twitter account after saying the "t" word twice on *LIVE with Kelly*.

Orange Is The New Black star and rising transgender icon, Laverne Cox appeared on the cover of *TIME magazine* in June—a first in the history of that mega-publication, but it doesn't signal that we've arrived at egalitarian bliss. The subtitle of that cover story is enough to indicate otherwise: "The Transgender Tipping Point: America's Next Civil Rights Frontier."

True, the trans community is gaining more visibility, and the "t" word is often used within that community to signify a level of pride and ownership over one's identity. So, why can't we all just celebrate it? Well, simply put, because we're all not living through it. A very thoughtful and thorough **article by J. Bryan Lowder** on the tension between 'insider' and 'outsider' use of the "t" word was recently published by *Slate*.

For KAPSULA, the bottom line is really all about acknowledgement—acknowledging the weight of words, even if they are only phenomenologically pixels on a screen or ink dots on a page. Following the cancellation of Ru Paul's short-lived ABC sitcom *Work It*, for reasons I'm sure you can put together, he commented to the Huffington Post that "**No one has ever said the word 'tr*nny' in a derogatory sense**." This is the most dangerous kind of thinking: willful ignorance. We would like our readership to know that we recognize the complicated nature of choosing to include such a loaded term in our publication. We welcome anyone wishing to comment further on these critical issues to contact us via the information in the and we will publish your letters on our website.

CHAPTER 9

AN EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL

Currency

by Sarah Beck

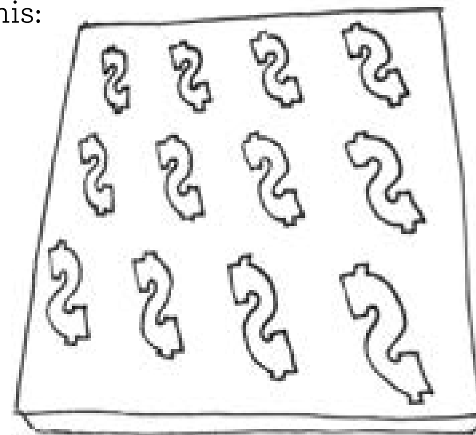
There is a large art gallery adjacent to my university. This gallery survives on government grants, entrance fees and donations. The gallery was in the news recently because it had undergone major layoffs. These cost-cutting measures were blamed on poor attendance. Months later the gallery was in the news again when it was reported that the CEO of the gallery collected $981,000 in salary and taxable benefits last year. Two thirds of his nearly one million dollar income was a bonus. This bonus was awarded for overseeing the completion of the gallery's renovation.

I hope he's using some of his money to buy art.

When buying art, one should make a choice based on the work's price relative to the price of the property it will be displayed in. This is a rule developed by a man named Tobias Meyer. Meyer is an auctioneer at a place called Sotheby's. Sotheby's auctions luxury goods, notably famous and expensive artworks.

The only painting I have in my apartment was free, which likely holds true with Tobias' law of proportion. Curiously my painting is of dollar signs.

It looks like this:



According to Donald Thompson, author of *The $12 Million Stuffed Shark*, the best sellers on the art market are paintings that feature pretty women or children. The colour red is most saleable, followed by white, then blue, yellow, green then black. Horizontals always sell better than verticals, brights over pales, and flowers over fruit. Water adds value if it is calm, and cows always do poorly. Noted.

Thompson's research reminds me of the Russian painters Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid who used census figures to paint. They decided they would make country-specific paintings, creating a best and a worst for each. Using the census they polled the citizens of various countries. Average people were questioned about what they most wanted and least wanted in a painting for purchase and display in their home.

No rock was left unturned. Citizens were asked questions that included framing, sizing and beloved signifiers. The painting they produced for America was the size of a dishwasher and featured George Washington. George Washington is also on American paper money.

American paper money looks like this:

The following is a list from Thompson's book. It is a list of jobs held by the top twenty active collectors of contemporary art. Below they are listed by their source of income and in order of their purchasing power:

Luxury goods
Investment banking
Financial services
Retail
Hedge funds
Construction
Financier
Investments
Investment banking
Textiles
Magazines
Venture capitalist
Luxury goods
Advertising
Supermarkets
Stockbroking
Financial services
Retail
Industrialist
Casinos

A cursory look at this list tells me that the major movers and shakers know how to make an investment. Like all investments there is a need to protect the financial value not just of purchases, but institutions that support the structures that guarantee those values. The advertiser on this list is a person I can readily identify and suggest is in a unique position to promote and increase the value of his collection. In fact I am certain he has been accused of it.

Artist Andy Warhol started his career in the advertising business. In fact he was a commercial illustrator with a penchant for drawing shoes. Warhol knew a thing or two about brands, and changed the art world when he brought brands into the gallery with his Brillo boxes.

Brillo is a brand of scouring pads that were commonly used in American homes when Warhol was alive. Most Americans, particularly housewives, would be able to recognize a Brillo box.

A Brillo box used to look like this:

Today the packages look like this:

Warhol's Brillo boxes, according to philosophers, asked the audience to contemplate the following: if two objects are the same, yet one is art and one isn't, what is the difference?

I suggest the difference may in part be financial. Brillo packages cost $2.99. A Warhol Brillo box costs $350,000.

Later Warhol started painting money. He said it was because he loved it best. He also suggested that perhaps we should just hang money on the wall instead of art. Warhol suggested that the art market and commerce were having an effect on one another. As the art market became more commercialized, commerce became more artistic.

This is old news today.

Artists since Warhol have assumed brand-like personalities, an amusing détournement after brands spent decades adopting the tropes of people, carrying personality, value and distinctness.

Contemporary artists have become brands unto themselves. The British artist Damien Hirst is the richest living artist to date. Unlike the fools before him he was determined to see financial payoff before he died. Not only is his work commercially popular, it is outsourced like all contemporary management. This means more output. He has been careful to diversify, buying up the work of younger artists. His association with them strengthens their brand and improves his investment.

The Louis Vuitton brand has similarly lent its aura to artists, inviting cutting-edge contemporary artists to design purses. These limited edition purses sold very well. Louis Vuitton, aka LV, are designers of luxury goods, most notably purses and luggage. Their product is one of the most counterfeited items in the whole world. Contemporary art and design share overlapping features, certainly when branding substitutes for critical judgment in all culture markets, be it purses or art.

A new phenomenon of our decade is the purse rental service. Luxury purses cost in the neighborhood of $15,000 to buy, so rental services cater to a young woman's desire to participate in the luxury good economy for a fraction of the price. Once she tires of her rental purse, she can exchange it for another.

Recently the news reported that a horde of young ladies had been sleeping in the streets of Toronto. Despite having been there for several nights, they weren't homeless. They were camping outside of H&M to be first in line for the launch of Jimmy Choo's H&M line. Jimmy Choo is a brand of luxury women's shoes. Jimmy Choo shoes can cost between $400—$1500. H&M Jimmy Choo shoes would be cheaper. These young ladies wanted a piece of the action.

I wondered about how these lower priced luxury items would be differentiated from their more expensive counterparts in the minds of their owners. Physically there are price point markers built into every stage of a brand so higher priced versions can be differentiated from lower ones. Otherwise, who would pay for the more expensive version? A discerning consumer can certainly spot a Gucci bag made illegally or on the cheap. Does it matter if it's the real thing to the person who owns it?

Perhaps the most offensive aspect of luxury goods is their markup. Only the highest of the highest end, and I mean limited runs of perhaps several hundred, were ever made by couture standards.

'Couture' is a word that no longer holds its meaning. Originally, there was a council in France that had to approve and certify an item was couture based on its high standards for workmanship, worker equity and skill. The council allowed only those items deemed couture to lay claim to the couture

name and the couture price.

These days, unless you are buying an absolute top, top of the line bag from Gucci (after waiting patiently on a list), the purse was produced in China, or a sweatshop in a country far more obscure. This is true of all luxury labels. The majority of their expensive products are produced in factories alongside jeans. Inexpensive jeans and T-shirts. This does not cost a lot of money.

I suggest that the luxury goods market lacks transparency and regulation. Donald Thompson, an economics professor, has similar feelings about the art market. He calls it the largest unregulated and least transparent market in the world.

Also in the news recently I read about an organized crime ring in New Jersey. This ring involved multiple mayors, rabbis and a large network of people from all sectors of society in black market trade. The trading being conducted was in human organs, a rare and exclusive market for those who can afford to pay.

Masquerading as construction workers, the ring demonstrated an expertise in convincing hospitals that organ sellers were concerned relatives eager to donate those same organs to their ailing loved ones. If the organ provider suffered a change of heart they would be held at gunpoint and convinced anew of their convictions.

Human kidneys were purchased for $10,000 then sold for $160,000. This is a 1600% markup. I read that one transaction transpired with the help of a box of Apple Jacks. Apple Jacks is the cereal that does not taste like apples. Its box looks like this:

The prize stuffed inside was $97,000.

Like most schemes you'd have to be pretty creative to pull it off. You'd also have to be pretty creative to dream it up in the first place. The genius of this particular operation was twofold. Rabbis, one dubbed 'The Matchmaker' convinced Israelis to sell their organs. They would fly to America concealing the black market trade by using their own bodies as delivery envelopes.

The other intelligent thing the ring did was to diversify. This approach is simply good business, especially in a high stakes market. So what else are people willing to buy from Rabbis beside black market organs?

Louis Vuitton purses.

Demand and desire for an object has little relationship to practical reality. A coveted object frequently lies beyond our means and is occasionally rare. In an art market flooded with work of varying caliber, it is the experts who determine which ones are the most desirable, even if these decisions defy logic.

After his death the Andy Warhol Art Authentication Board was created to address an increase in forgeries. But what is a Warhol forgery?

Warhol adopted the tropes of mass production, using hangers-on as labour in the production of his work. He called his studio "The Factory." His Factory approach challenged traditional notions of art production. Acting as a type of assembly line for all that bore the Warhol brand, production included such items as silk screens and films. Works were produced *en masse* and used as currency to reimburse both paid and unpaid workers. His outsourcing helped multiply his output. Some works were signed, some were not, and some were signed by his mother.

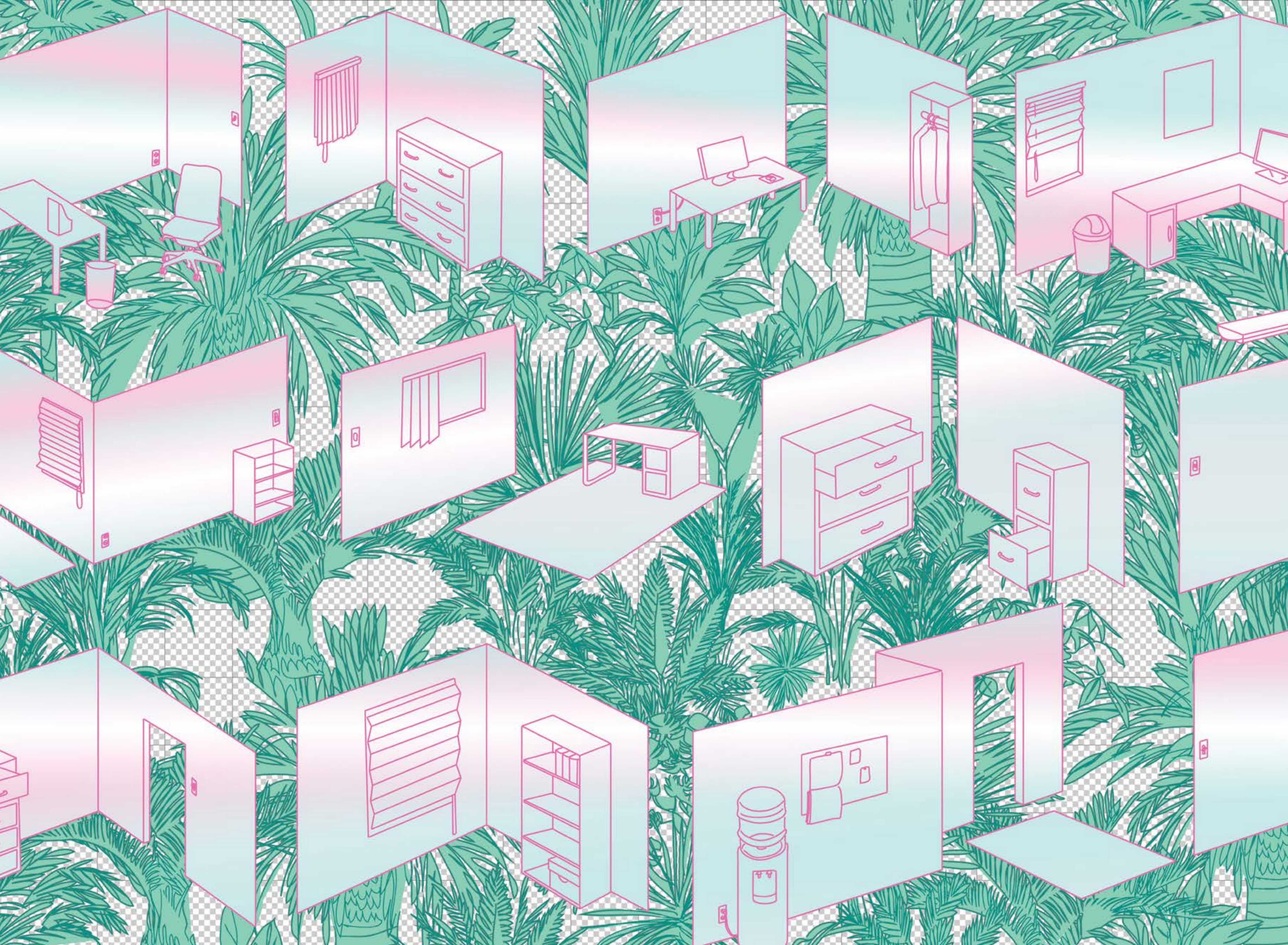
The authentication board accepted the absurd task of guaranteeing each Warhol it encountered. This seems like a cruel joke in light of Warhol's intention of questioning art and authenticity. This board, whether evaluating for insurance or sale purposes, marks the back of each piece with a permanent evaluation of its ruling.

When tricked, the board proved inconsistent by contradicting its own judgment. To make matters more complex the board does not provide explanations for, or revisit (without trickery), its decisions. This is additionally complicated by the board's conflict of interest as it is also responsible for selling works in the same market as those it rules on. Yikes.

Remember—without experts there could be no fakes.

SARAH BECK

This is Sarah's second appearance in KAPSULA, and the second excerpt from her novel *Currency*. *Currency* is a humorous story about money, art, fakes and sea pirates. Sarah is currently Artist in Residence at the International Space University. To learn more about her work, or order your own copy of *Currency*, visit



THE PUNCH LINE

NOT POST-CAPITALISTS, HYPER-CAPITALISTS

LINDSAY LeBLANC IN CONVERSATION WITH TOUGH GUY MOUNTAIN

In Attendance

Jonathan Carroll as **Joan Popular**

Iain Soder as **Ivan Phone**

Cat Bluemke as **Cathy Beige-Walker**

Chloe Sullivan as **Coco Verissimo**

Allan Lavell as **Alvin Label**

with a special guest appearance by

Lindsay LeBlanc as **Lindsay LeBlanc**

Lindsay LeBlanc: How did you all start working together, and how did you conceive of Tough Guy Mountain? What about this subject matter and this format was appealing?

Ivan Phone: The subject matter sort of came over time. At least a couple of us used to work in theatre together in Halifax. I met [Joan] because I was directing a play and he auditioned for it. Well, no, I knew him before that, but I asked him to audition for that play, and that's how we started working together—as well as [Alvin] and, actually, [Coco] back there. And right as I was finishing art school to move to Toronto, [Joan] was moving to Toronto to start art school, and we were roommates, so we moved at the same time. He was starting art school, and I was sort of in the same place, because I was trying to figure out what to do after art school in a new city, and so we decided we wanted to make a collective, and attach all of our past projects into some cohesive whole, because we didn't really believe in the ability of an individual to promote themselves as an artist—or at least it wasn't something that was of interest to us. We had a decent body of work between this small group of us, and if we all promoted it as our own, we'd come across like really impressive artists.

We did a play called *Ubu Enchained*, which was about a rich, loaded, business-type persona but he was kind of heroic—

Joan Popular: It's by Alfred Jarry; he birthed the avant-garde of the 20th century. It's a good play.

IP: Yeah, *Ubu Enchained* was written in 1899 so [Jarry] was the definition of "turn of the century." And then...I mean, when did we decide we wanted to make everything a business aesthetic?

JP: What came first was this desire to find new ways to engage with audiences, like when we were doing theatre in Halifax: in that *Ubu* play, [Ivan] sort of thought up a couple different ways to fuck with the formal expectations of the theatre, so for example, the audience wasn't sitting, they had to move around the set pieces. And, later, we put on a production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* with just three of us, but did it outside and as minimally [as possible]—it was very much an abstraction of the musical, but the point was to figure out a new way to engage with an audience. So that came before our interest in a business aesthetic, but I think the business aesthetic developed out of wanting to group all of our work under one collective brand. We realized that what we were looking for was a brand, rather than just an individual with work. We wanted a brand to cram all these different aspects of all of our practices underneath, and I think branding just naturally leads to thinking about...

LL: Capitalist structures, and...

JP: Yeah.

IP: We became obsessed with the structure of branding, and [Joan] was taking out books from the library about branding, and we were reading, and laughing, and learning a lot. And all of our ideas were spawned based on that. I mean, now, more and more spheres are talking about branding as being important. [Coco] is an actor and she has to define her brand all the time. But it's definitely something that is corporate in nature.

Coco Verissimo: Limiting, but important.

LL: So on that note, and for the "folks at home" who aren't so familiar with your work, what exactly is the structure of Tough Guy Mountain? I know you have titles such as Executive, or Intern; how does that work, how do you bring new people to the Mountain?

IP: We do struggle sometimes running into the unique barrier of confusing our fictional company with our real company. Because we do have an organizational structure, in terms of how we produce work, how we promote work, how we work together, and then we also have a fiction that we're always working on, where we play Executives and Interns, and Secretaries, and things like that. Sometimes we do honestly forget, and sometimes we're treating our fake interns like real interns, or sometimes people are really trying hard to get promotions, to move from Intern to Executive...

Cathy Beige-Walker: And it happens, a beautiful story.

IP: A beautiful business story. So, I mean, I think that's a pretty unique problem that we have to deal with.

LL: I find that very interesting—where is that line then?

JP: When we are performing, there are people who are labelled as Executives and Interns, but in reality, everyone is sort of engaged with the concept that we're interested in.

IP: At least when we're doing it well.

JP: Yeah. I guess the line exists where whoever wants to put in the work on our performances, or whatever, does. That's sort of how the real business works, is we're all interested in this similar aesthetic. And we all work together to execute that. And that aesthetic includes... I think performing these hierarchical roles is part of that aesthetic that we're all interested in.

LL: And I mean, I would love to talk about that, and that kind of leads beautifully into my next question, which is, how would you define the Tough Guy Mountain aesthetic? Or I guess in different terms, what is your mandate, what's the corporate policy, what exactly is it that you do?

IP: In our fictional company or our real company?

LL: Both. I'm so interested in this fictional

company/real company divide.

IP: So our fictional company has billions and billions and billions of dollars in the bank.

LL: Right. Lots of things in the works, lots of feelers out there, doing a lot of things at once. Really impressive.

IP: Yes. We have a thousand interns, at least—we lose track of them.

JP: A really large headquarters.

IP: It's almost as tall as the CN Tower but A LOT wider. And our fictional company is hired by the largest corporations in the world to invent their brands for them. So, essentially, we're a hyper-version of a brand consultancy firm.

JP: In this fictional idea of ourselves, brands are this raw resource—they're concept made real, concept materialized, or whatever. So in this fiction that we think about, and in the work that we're making about it, the company exists in a dimension called the Brandscape, where brands, which just exist as concepts here, are materialized into raw resources that Tough Guy Mountain collects, processes, and sells to companies.

IP: So what they [the companies] do is they create their organizational company infrastructure, and position themselves to be able to accumulate capital, and then everything is completed by us bestowing upon them the magical item of a brand. And that's when they become multi-national.

JP: It's sort of like the chicken and the egg: what comes first, the brand or the content that the brand is containing?

LL: Do you make art or do you make something else?

JP: I think we're definitely interested in aesthetics. That's all a brand is—it's a defined aesthetic. For example, Apple is an aesthetic that is defined in a number of ways, even through something like colour—it has a certain palette, lots of whites and greys—and it's an aesthetic of gestures, if you're talking about the swiping of a smartphone or an iPad, and it's an aesthetic of 'being' as well. I think that a brand can be an aesthetic of being.

IP: I wouldn't say this is the mandate but the way that our actual company produces art, and I would say that we work on art, is by examining the forms of things which are really successful in our society. I mean, corporations use brands and that's gone really really well for them. When we did the show... building condominiums, the condominium industry, is successful in Toronto, people are making a lot of money building condos, so we're just researching the formal elements of what that's like, aesthetically, and then seeing if we can just capture some of that success.

JP: With condos, specifically, it is lifestyle branding, too. So again, it's creating a general aesthetic for people to adhere to.

LL: Okay. Do you associate what you are doing, then, with post-Internet art as a larger framework?

IP: An inevitability.

LL: Maybe. Net art, I guess. I mean, I wouldn't really consider what you guys do as "net art"—I would consider it post-Internet, and related to these hybrid forms between object and online. Online plays a big role in it all, but then the work gets disseminated from and beyond that.

IP: I would say, at the very least, we're engaged by it—I mean, we read a lot about post-Internet art. Even in day-to-day social media doings... that's something that is engrained in us.

JP: And I think a similarity exists in post-Internet art's interest in the de-materialized object, and the act of de-materialization—even brand concepts, which by nature are

de-materialized, moving between the material and the immaterial as well.

LL: Exactly, that transitory space. There's a precedent for this in projects like *dis Magazine*. Do you guys see *dis* as an influence, or, similarly, K-Hole? In the 90's there was this uprising of these "corporate bodies" that I guess served as a critique or satire, I don't know if satire is the right word, but at the same time emulated those structures. Do you see those groups as influences? What are your influences?

JP: We are super sympathetic to K-Hole, I think. Just in terms of tone, maybe tone in a very general sense, because they're a lot better at it, they're a lot better at this post-irony thing than we are. I think we have a bit more in terms of theatrical flourishes...

IP: Or we rely more on theatrical flourishes, where one of the nice things about K-Hole is when you're reading their work, it makes you laugh, but they're very much talking about real things. We're talking about fictions.

LL: Well that's an interesting distinction, for sure. So what about *dis* then? They have a bit more of a fictional element to what they do, in terms of branding and "corporate" structure, and not quite in the same way as K-Hole. How do you see your relationship to dis—or anything outside of art as well? I'm interested in knowing what you draw upon when conceiving your projects.

CB-W: Well, with the iPad dresses that we're making currently, that was less drawing on, let's say, a brand that already existed, but more so on a trend of wearable technology that's existing post-art, which is flourishing at OCADU as well.

The dress is out.

LL: Oh wow.

JP: It's performance wear.

CB-W: And it's kind of hitting you over the head with its wearable technology.

LL: So I guess the divide, as you were saying, between TGM and *dis*, or TGM and K-Hole, is that performative aspect—because I've heard you bring up performance quite a bit, and don't I see that as something dominant throughout the work that they do.

Alvin Label: This is also what we look like in them.

LL: Stunners.

AL: It's an important thing to see.

IP: We come from heavy performance backgrounds.

LL: Right, and I didn't know that—that you all came from theatre backgrounds. I can see that now, it's actually something that makes a lot of sense, because it's true that performativity plays a big role in your work.

CV: The iPad dresses were also made for the e-go campaign, which has a huge performance element to it...

JP: Yeah, we stress this aspect of Tough Guy Mountain where we call it a content-free brand, but we also sometimes make products that try to engage with new media in some sort of way, and we had this thing that we used the dresses for called e-go, the idea being that if you don't want to go to an event or a party, someone in that dress will go for you, and then you will appear on that iPad and you attend the party virtually. But that's actually something that I don't...it's sort of in conflict with our idea of being content-free...

IP: Well, we just say we are working towards the first content-free brand. And, I mean, a lot of our products aren't actual "content." E-go did not legitimately provide a service or an object to anyone.

JP: Yeah. And, I guess by executing these... you know how there'd be architects in the 20th century who were just theoretical architects? Like, de-constructivist architects made plans for buildings or whatever... We make plans for these products to further describe what our brand is—what sort of corporate entity we are.

LL: Well is it all to describe that brand or is it also a form of critique? Do you see what you're doing as critique, and, if so, is it a critique of capitalist and neo-capitalist systems, is it a critique of the market, and the artist in the market... or is it something else entirely?

IP: Well... we don't explicitly use the words critique, or satire, or lampoon. But it's usually something that comes up whenever we're talking to someone else about it. Recently we collaborated with Whippersnapper gallery and we were writing a grant with them, and they were trying to describe us, and they kept using those words. And we weren't entirely comfortable with it, because I don't think it necessarily defines what we're doing. I think the critique or the satire is more inherent in the way the audience already views the subject matter.
We're doing a show about condos, and people already have pre-conceived notions about that.

JP: It's really nothing new to critique condominium developments specifically or capitalism generally. There's nothing new to say there, in terms of, like, "tellin' it." But if we can find some way, to, um, I think we're more interested in showing...

IP: Like research investigation and then a demonstration of formal elements that have to do with these things. And then the critique will come from how people already perceive that subject matter. People always assume we're just making fun of stuff, and that's maybe the tone that comes across but that's not necessarily our intention.

LL: I wouldn't necessarily place you under the umbrella of satire. I don't really like that word and I appreciate you don't like critique either. I was reading an interesting article the other day about how these types of projects or groups are less about a critique and more about trying to evade the system. So by turning yourself into a brand, you are skirting around these big galleries and big collectors, and you're capitalizing on a mass market. And that's something that almost sucks you out of that art market portal and puts you in a different stream. That may be a little bit more on point with what you are doing, but I know you don't necessarily aim to make money, right?

JP: Instead of letting the structure that you're

a part of position you—which is, I think, if you are an artist who's playing the gallery system in the way that you have to if you want to be a professional artist nowadays—instead of letting the system define the role for you, by acknowledging the market forces at play, maybe you could say, or by acknowledging your place in capitalism, and I think a lot of art is resistant to that acknowledgment, by acknowledging that, it is a form of taking control of your position...

IP: And not just acknowledging but engaging with that.

JP: Yeah, actively defining the position that you're in.

IP: I agree with what you said, on the one hand it's not unprecedented for a collective under a brand to engage...I mean, Toronto's own General Idea standing as the most clear cut example, and I would list them as an influence for sure, um... but you said something about circumventing the art market and then engaging with a mass market?

LL: Yeah, so, the art market is made up of this small population, what you could call the one percent, dominated by big shots in larger galleries, and collectors with stupid amounts of money who work for, I don't know, meat companies. So what I mean when I say circumventing the art market in favour of the mass market is, instead of playing up to that one percent, you're taking the other route, you make a brand, and a brand, inevitably, is intended to appeal to the masses.

IP: Exactly, yeah. [Coco], will you turn on my computer and open up Google and type the D key and it'll go to [Google] Drive? There's just this one quote from our—well, we're trying to write a, well, we're calling it our *Mountaineers Brand Book*, and just because you said we aren't interested in making money—

LL: Well, I was interested if you are. That was actually more of a question: do you ever intend to make money off of what you're doing?

IP: I'm hoping this will answer it. Prepared answer for this one. So if you could look up the *Brand Book*...

LL: Ahem. Not prepared enough.

IP: Yeah we should've had it loaded.

LL: I'm just kidding. You gave me wine, I'm happy.

IP: Joan or Coco, do you want to read it out?

CV: Tough Guy Mountain is all about making money for ironic reasons, making money to be funny, making money as an institutional critique, making money for aesthetic purposes, making money to support ourselves, making money for the sake of accumulating wealth.

IP: So that's the answer to whether we are eventually interested in making money.

LL: I like that.

CV: All the bases covered.

LL: Yeah, all the bases were covered, exactly. Where do I go from there? I got the Facebook invitation for *VirtualSled*, I didn't get to go—I was at *CONDOMAXIMUM*.

Did you want to talk a little bit about your work or the projects that you're working on? I know you just showed me the dress...

JP: The performance wear.

LL: Yes, the performance wear.

IP: *VirtualSled* is done, now, right?

JP: Yeah *VirtualSled* is done. A lot of the things we do are ephemeral, and a lot of the things we do underscore technological absurdity, the absurd possibilities for technology. *VirtualSled* was a virtual version of a music festival. I guess in that case we were brand-mating ourselves with a music festival, and music festivals are this new kind of capitalist entity, and they're capitalizing on um, uh...

LL: Anti-capitalism, basically.

JP: Sure, yeah.

LL: Or a community of people.

JP: Exactly. They're a great way of making money off of these communities of musicians, so just even doing work in that field has interesting connotations. So that was one thing we were doing.

IP: And the project was just a 3-D room that you could move around in on your laptop. You download the software off the internet, it takes 30 seconds, and you're able to move around a room with chairs and objects in it, and a stage with a band on it, and YouTube clips of the bands that are currently playing at Sled Island (a festival in Calgary).

LL: So it's not just about your performance, but also, in some way, including the viewers. I do remember *CONDOMAXIMUM* being similar—I can't imagine that project existing in a space that didn't allow for a certain level of engagement, and obviously it demanded a certain level of engagement—is that a priority as well?

IP: Yeah. I mean, that goes back to what we were saying about our theatre projects before moving to Toronto, that's always been our sensibility. Another project we've been working on, ongoing, for a while, is called *Pop-Up Office*. And we recently did it at a street festival, inside of, you know, a little tent, where we set up our cubicles, and all our performances in that were geared towards being uh, specific to… well, that's part of the festival itself… but every performance we put in there was based on some kind of audience interaction or depended on it to a certain extent. For us, that was our first time engaging with a non-art crowd. It was just people who go to street festivals, so we really did not know what to expect.

LL: How did that go?

IP: We prepared thirteen performances with the idea of figuring out which ones would work.

JP: They were all little things, all of them involved some sort of audience participation, some were easier than others, but all-in-all it was definitely challenging to get people to engage…

IP: At the end of the night we only had four performances left, it went from thirteen down to four, and we made those decisions pretty quickly. Like, "Okay, this, this, and this aren't going to work because of the crowd." The festival also wasn't necessarily set up specifically enough to suit our needs. We're going to do another one and we think we'll be a lot more ready for it. But I mean, we got it to the point where our performances were consistently being engaged with, enjoyably, by the goers of the street festival.

JP: Talking about influences, another big thing that we observe, and that inspires us in the ways we want to engage with audiences, is how corporations are engaging with audiences through these sort of spectacle events. For example, just recently, Mountain Dew set up this truck outside of a 7/11 nearby, and when you went to 7/11 and bought Mountain Dew, they had this sweet truck… I don't know, I wasn't there, you [Ivan] were there.

IP: Right, well it was this big trailer, or, what are those? Boxcars, I guess, and inside it they were ironing on t-shirts for anyone who bought Mountain Dew. But they also had this green screen in there that they weren't using for anything, and a whole bunch of videos of people on snowboards and stuff like that, and the person out there on the street enlisting people to take advantage of this promotion. The way that we struggle with trying to emulate that form is that these companies pretty much build their performance on giving away a ton of free stuff.

LL: And you don't have those resources.

IP: Right. So we have to come up with concepts to give people that they'll want. We have to come up with a performance concept that they will be willing and able to engage with. Which is the challenge.

JP: In the case of the Condo show, it's sort of a concept that is familiar to everyone, especially [those] living in Toronto. It's almost an "in" joke or something in terms of condos—everyone gets it, why pointing out these banal facts of life is sort of funny. I think that works with an artsier crowd, but if you're just talking to the public, you have to be a bit more general… Right now, we're interested in coming up with viable performances that, like you were saying earlier, draw in the masses. The way that brands are constructed to have mass appeal, we want performances that are engaging in this massive way. Which I think is relevant in terms of

corporate culture because that's also how, in the day and age of this onslaught of imagery, all the time, from brands but also from your Facebook feed, and all the images you get off Instagram and Tumblr, brands are just sort of... it's hard to make your voice heard. So Mountain Dew, and all the big brands, are looking for more intimate connections that are similar to theatrical performances. But mostly, like [Ivan] said, they just use their massive capital...

IP: I mean, don't get me wrong, if we could lean on the crutch of building our performances around giving away free stuff that would ensure their success, that would be great, but since we can't we do have the fun limitation of having to come up with better ideas. Because you can ensure your success by giving away free t-shirts at the end, or free product, but we don't have the ability to do that so we have to think a lot more creatively, which is probably healthier for us in the long run.

JP: Another influence, that I think [Ivan] and I are both into, at least, if not other people, is Bertolt Brecht and the way he went about making theatre. He sort of always had this agenda of like, affecting... people not needing to have a specific background to be affected in the way he wanted them to be affected, the alienation effect worked regardless of whether you were a theatre buff or not—

IP: He wanted all his plays to be objective.

JP: Yeah, and in terms of audience engagement that's something else we're interested in. It's ironic because we're interested in doing it within a capitalist aesthetic rather than a Marxist aesthetic, but it's definitely another inspiration. I think you're right in saying there's this desire for a mass audience. But it's just a desire to make something that a massive amount of people can engage with.

IP: There's quite a bit of 20th century theatre and performance art that experimented with audience engagement. And there was lots of writing about it. Not that it stopped entirely, but it definitely stopped to an extent in the theatre world. There are still lots of really interesting experimental theatre companies, who are interested in different ways to engage your audience, or activate your audience, or whatever terminology you're using.

JP: And there's also a lot of corporations that are interested in the exact same thing, from a very similar angle as well. Because of how hard it is to get one message out to a large amount of people, just because of how confused the channels of communication are now, corporations are more interested in these intimate audience engagements that are achievable through theatre. So I think that's another point where the theatre/performance background coincides with the interest in branding—nowadays they have these eerily similar end games.

IP: *Creative marketing*

JP: We have this optimistic view that there's a role for art to play in maybe what you could call neo-capitalism—in an "Information Society," there's a role for specifically conceptual art to play.

IP: And since people throw out the term information economy all the time, there's this bubbling movement about the concept, and moving towards an information economy. Despite the fact that artists have such a small role to play in the current economy, they could position themselves to be in a stronger position in a new economy, the information economy.

LL: Very good. And, ok. This is a really cheap question... I'm not going to ask it.

IP: We love cheap.

CV: What are the affairs like at the office? ... Without emotion.

IP: Now we'll forever wonder what your cheap question was.

LL: Is Tough Guy Mountain for sale?

CV: Only if you have a real billion dollars.