



SECURITIES OF ART

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ON THE HISTORY OF AUTHENTICATION BETWEEN  
WORK, TEXT AND CONTEXT

**05.+06.12.2024**

**WORKSHOP WITH:**

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URSULA FROHNE (MÜNSTER) | IAN HAYWOOD (LONDON)

ANTJE KRAUSE-WAHL (FRANKFURT AM MAIN) | LUKAS TÖPFER (OLDENBURG)

FELIX VOGEL (KASSEL) | TOBIAS VOGT (OLDENBURG)

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Carl von Ossietzky  
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# PROGRAM

## Thursday, 5.12.

- 16:30 – 17:00** Introduction
- 17:00 – 18:00** Tobias Vogt: Subscription and Speculation. William Hogarth's *Boys Peeping at Nature*
- 18:00 – 19:00** Ian Haywood: The Art of Money: Travels in the Realms of Gold in Georgian Britain

## Friday, 6.12.

- 09:30 – 10:30** Ursula Frohne: The Art of Making Money
- 10:30 – 11:30** Lukas Töpfer: A Certified and Notarized Original Reproduction. Marcel Duchamp and the Excess of Authentication  
**(short break)**
- 11:45 – 12:45** Antje Krause-Wahl: *Gold Diggers of '84*. Values in General Idea's Securities

## **(lunch break)**

- 14:30 – 15:30** Judith Brachem: Four Stitches. Signing without Signature in Martin Margiela's Parerga
- 15:30 – 16:30** Felix Vogel: Eva Barto's Contracts  
**(short break)**
- 16:45 – 17:45** Sophie Cras: Committed to Art. Jonas Lund's *Smart Burn Contracts*
- 17:45 – 18:30** Conclusion

## Subscription and Speculation. William Hogarth's *Boys Peeping at Nature*

In examining Hogarth's first subscription ticket *Boys Peeping at Nature* for his series *A Harlot's Progress*, my lecture will address and illustrate three points: Firstly, I aim to reconstruct the introduction of the subscription model for the sale of prints and to rebut the art historiographical narrative that exaggerates Hogarth's role in this regard. Secondly, I will explore the link between subscription and speculation during this period. The collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720 and its immediate consequences for both the themes and modes of printmaking are a key example of this. Thirdly, the relationship between the subscription ticket, the six paintings of *A Harlot's Progress* and not least the six etchings must be analysed more closely through the lens of the relationship between parergon and ergon. Against the historical background of economic, political and social insecurity and the artists' need for security, the subscription model for prints thus emerges as a specific financing and marketing instrument, albeit one that foreshadows future developments of artistic intervention.

Tobias Vogt is Professor of Art History at the Institute of Art and Visual Culture at Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg. His research interests include the borders between image and text, between works of art and works of non-art and, more recently, between art and finance. Amongst his publications are the monographs *Untitled. Zur Karriere unbetitelter Kunst in der jüngsten Moderne* (2006), *Artikel der Kunst. Alltagsobjekt und Wortspiel in den Pariser Bildkünsten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (2019) and the co-edited volume *Kunst ↔ Begriffe der Gegenwart. Von Allegorie bis Zip* (2013). He is leading the DFG-funded project "Securities of Art. Authentication as an artistic concept in times of financial crisis 1720-2020".

## The Art of Money: Travels in the Realms of Gold in Georgian Britain

The controversial Bank Restriction Act (1797-1821) was perceived by many liberals and radicals as a prime example of Old Corruption's manipulation of the credit economy: the replacement of metal currency by low-denomination paper banknotes was attacked as a pernicious fiction which perpetuated the huge national debt and high taxation. The hike in Bank of England prosecutions for 'uttering' or handling fake banknotes reinforced this perception of Georgian capitalism as a monstrous hoodwinking of the public and a desertion of the secure, authentic reality of the gold standard. In this talk I will argue that the radical mythology of 'paper versus gold' (Cobbett) was in fact a flawed dichotomy as bullion was subject to its own unstable processes of financial, political and cultural legitimacy, all of which took place on paper. Instead of seeing paper money as the 'ghost of gold' (Shelley), I will focus on the ways in which the visual representation of the production and circulation of money provides insights into the complex relationship between authentic and dis-credited currency.

Ian Haywood is Professor of English at Roehampton University, London. He has written extensively on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British radicalism and its impact on literary and visual culture. His publications include *The Revolution in Popular Literature* (2004), *Bloody Romanticism* (2006), *Romanticism and Caricature* (2013), *Spain in British Romanticism* (2018, co-edited with Diego Daglia), *Romanticism and Illustration* (2019, co-edited with Mary Shannon and Susan Matthews), *The Rise of Victorian Caricature* (2020) and *Queen Caroline and the Power of Caricature in Georgian England* (2023). His next monograph project is *Frankenstein and Romantic Visual Culture* (contracted with Bloomsbury). He was President of the British Association for Romantic Studies 2015-19, and coordinates the *Romantic Illustration Network* (<https://romanticillustrationnetwork.com>). His interest in art and authenticity began with his first book *Faking It: Art and the Politics and Forgery* (1987), continued in the edited Praxis volume on *Romanticism, Forgery and the Credit Crunch* (2012) and now forms part of a new project on 'Romanticism and the Industrial Gaze'.

## The Art of Making Money

The paper examines the intricate relationships between art, the pursuit of wealth, and social status in late 19th-century American society, focusing on the depiction of dollar bills in American painting. These artworks, characterized by their deceptively realistic representations of paper currency, symbolized both economic success and the broader dynamics of high capitalism. At the same time, they raised concerns about possible counterfeiting, which led the U.S. Treasury to ban such expressions of artistic virtuosity. Against the backdrop of the Gilded Age and the financial instability of the time, this contribution explores how debates about the “solidity” of paper money – often compared to works of art – shaped contemporary artistic practices. For proponents of the gold standard, paper money was merely a representation, much like art that is appreciated for its own sake. The reflections in this paper are based on case studies of famous “artist-forgers,” whose convincingly authentic visualizations of dollar bills were valued as artworks. Parallels to the Pop Art movement of the 1960s, particularly to the works of Andy Warhol, ultimately shed light on the processes of negotiation between authenticity and imitation in relation to the fundamental significance of wealth and money for American art and society.

Ursula Frohne is Professor of Art History at the University of Münster. She was a curator at the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe and taught at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design. She held professorships at the University of Cologne, at the International University Bremen, and taught as guest professor at Brown University in Providence, R.I. She led the DFG research project “Reflection Spaces of Cinematographic Aesthetics” and received the Leo Spitzer Prize for Excellence in Research and Teaching from the University of Cologne in 2014. She is a co-founder and co-editor of the open-access journal *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual | Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur* (<https://21-inquiries.eu/en/issues/1-2020/>) and, since 2023, co-chair of the DFG Centre for Advanced Study “Access to Cultural Goods in Digital Change: Art Historical, Curatorial, and Ethical Aspects.” Her research focuses on contemporary art and technological media, political dimensions and socio-economic conditions of art and visual culture, as well as the interconnections of art, public spheres, and cultures of debate.

## A Certified and Notarized Original Reproduction. Marcel Duchamp and the Excess of Authentication

My paper analyzes the traces of different authentication procedures on the front and back of a so-called “original readymade” by Marcel Duchamp: two signatures (separated by 25 years), his instructions to a reproduction photographer (regarding the first of the two signatures), and a notarization (of the second signature which in turn authenticates the first). Duchamp, the son of a notary, created an excess of authentication that both confirmed and called into question the status of signatures, certificates, and notary stamps. He not only linked these questionable confirmations to contemporary finance, the problem of inflation, and the emerging attention economy, but also focused on “the ever-present reality of the copy as the *underlying condition of the original*” (in the words of Rosalind Krauss). Duchamp’s “serious games” explore how values are created and challenged in art, not least by continuously revisiting and revising a few simple, perhaps even banal ideas as well as by highlighting the uncanny resemblance between his “original readymades” and their numerous authorized reproductions, replicas, or slight variations. In short: My paper traces the curious path taken by *L.H.O.O.Q.* between the late 1910s and the late 1960s, an infamous work based on one of the most reproduced paintings of all time, executed by another son of a notary, Leonardo da Vinci.

Lukas Töpfer is currently employed at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg as part of the “Securities of Art” research project. From 2010 to 2019, he worked as a curator in Berlin (see [lukastoepler.com](http://lukastoepler.com)) and briefly in Baden-Baden before moving to Oldenburg in 2020. His most recent publications include the monograph *Am Abgrund der Bilder – “Birkenau”* (Deutscher Kunstverlag/De Gruyter 2023, together with the artist Michael Müller, whose multi-volume catalogue raisonné Töpfer is also co-editing). In July 2024, he successfully defended his PhD thesis *Die Beiwerke der Leere – Die Beiwerke des Lebens*. His academic research to date has focused primarily on the conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly with regard to its paratexts and parerga.

***Gold Diggers of '84. Values in General Idea's Securities***

In 1972, the artist collective General Idea sent a letter to 90 people and institutions announcing that the letter itself was a work of art and that, by virtue of its receipt, the recipients now owned a work by General Idea. This letter was followed by another, in which all 90 recipients were listed on a sheet designed as a security. *Gold Diggers of '84* (1972) is considered as an example of how General Idea used strategies of Mail Art to establish themselves in the art world: by sending a letter declared as a work of art to the Museum of Modern Art, they created the conditions to become part of the collection. General Idea's security, however, combines graphic elements from the aesthetics of securities with those of Mail Art and General Idea's own iconography. By situating its aesthetic form in the historical (and financial) contexts, I argue that the collective not only appropriated how economics generate value, but also confronted it with other, social values.

**Antje Krause-Wahl is Heisenberg-Professor for Contemporary Art at the Institute of Art History at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. She has published on body politics and artist's identity formations, surfaces and touch, and the mediality and materiality of art and fashion journals. Her methods are grounded in gender, queer and postcolonial studies with a strong interest in the social history of art.**

**Four Stitches.****Signing without Signature in Martin Margiela's Parerga**

When it comes to discussing the legitimization of fashion as art, the focus lies mostly on the conceptuality of said clothing. In this regard, the oeuvre of Belgian fashion designer Martin Margiela is also examined based on his ideas.

This presentation, however, will focus on the designer's parerga. Whereas the couturier Charles Frederick Worth was the first to sign his designs with a nametag in the mid-19th century, thus declaring himself an artist, Martin Margiela sewed an all-white label into his first collections at the end of the 1980s, which was attached from the outside by four visible stitches. Originally intended to be detached, the nameless label became an icon for the Maison Martin Margiela. Similar strategies of indeterminacy are used by Margiela in his other parerga: showrooms are completely immersed in white, models present his collections with their faces covered, he himself remains entirely invisible as an artist-designer, and the perfume (*untitled*) recurs to the many untitled works of 20th century conceptual art. With reference to Derrida's "The Truth in Painting", Margiela's non-signifiers will be examined for their legitimization of clothing as art. In addition to (missing) titles, texts and framings of the collections, the – supposedly – unsigned signature, which authenticates Margiela's work as art, lies at the center of the investigation.

Judith Brachem works as a research fellow at the Institute of Art and Visual Culture at Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg. Her research focuses on textile and vestimentary art, fashioned bodies, as well as digital culture. In her PhD thesis, which she is currently working on, she transfers the concept of the assemblage to the realms of fashion and examines the materiality of garments that combine found and uncommon objects, such as mushrooms, plants, or machines, with textiles.

## Eva Barto's Contracts

Eva Barto's artistic practice is characterised by a visual asceticism that is at odds with her excessive engagement with the legal foundations (or even their creation) of artistic production. My paper deals with the project *The Supporters* (2019–), which Eva Barto initiated together with three institutions – Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Kunstverein Nürnberg, Galerie Max Mayer. At its core, the project consists of a cycle of financial transactions between the three institutions, each of which has a different legal status and therefore different possibilities (or constraints) for financial support: Grants, donations, sponsorship, etc. In order to define these contributions and the resulting consequences, Eva Barto has drawn up comprehensive contracts that make all business relationships transparent and accessible to exhibition visitors.

In my paper, I will examine three aspects: Firstly, the contracts will be subjected to a close reading in order to define their content, function and form. Secondly, I will relate the contracts to the specific exhibition situations and explain how the restrictions stipulated therein not only determine them, but also determine, among other things, under which conditions which elements become a work of art (or can lose this status again), which relationship to value formation this entails and who has the authority to do so by means of which processes. Thirdly, the concrete form of the work must be determined and placed in relation to the contractual documents.

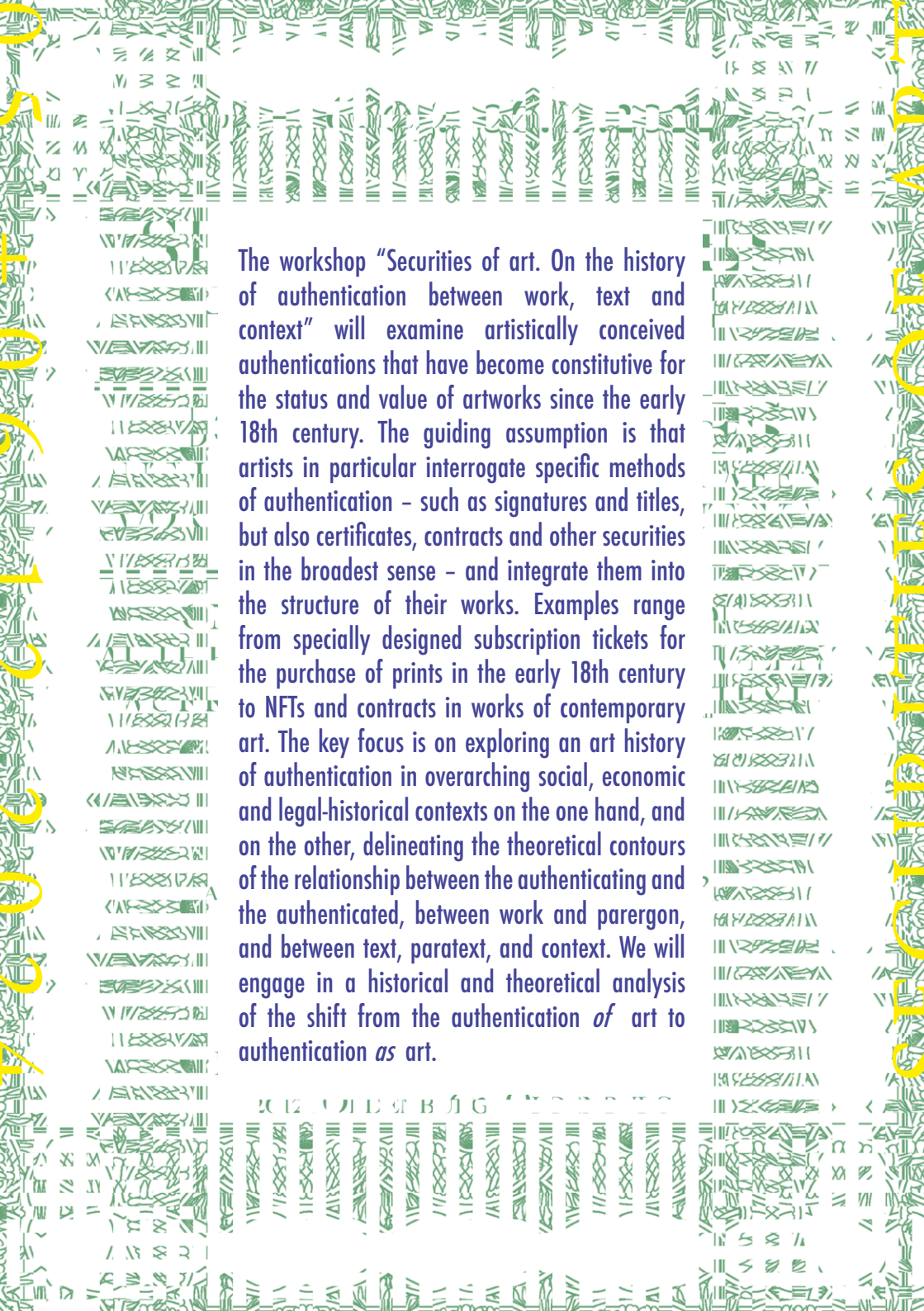
Felix Vogel is professor of Art and Knowledge at the University of Kassel and member of documenta Institute. He received his PhD in art history from the Université de Fribourg (CH) with a thesis on the Hameau de la Reine. Before coming to Kassel in spring 2021, he was lecturer at the University of Basel and visiting lecturer at HEAD Genève, Universidade de Lisboa, University of Toronto and Universidade Federal de São Paulo. Felix Vogel is currently working on a monograph on the artist group Art & Language as well as a project on infrastructures of contemporary art.

Committed to Art. Jonas Lund's *Smart Burn Contracts*

In 2023, the Centre Pompidou became the first museum of modern and contemporary art to acquire a selection of artworks taking the form of NFTs (Non Fongible Tokens). Among them is a deliberately unspectacular piece by Swedish artist Jonas Lund: on a white rectangular background, black digital letters spell the following sentence: “The Owner of This NFT May not SELL ANY WORKS FROM THEIR COLLECTION. Continuously In perpetuity.” While the typography and wording are remindful of the classic tradition of conceptual art, such as John Baldessari's text paintings or Lawrence Weiner's statements, Lund's work takes full advantage of the specificities of the NFT technology, and of the “smart contracts” accompanying their trade. Should the terms of the selling agreement written on the piece – and, indeed, constituting the piece – not be fulfilled, the artist shall “burn” the NFT by suppressing it from the owner's digital “wallet.”

My paper will use this case-study to reflect on the practice of certificates as art, between the 1960s and the present, investigating artists' attempts to rethink the conditions of exchange in times of speculation. It will ask how art creates spaces of contractual commitment within an atomized economy based on deregulated free trade.

Sophie Cras (Associate Prof. Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris) is a scholar of contemporary European and North American art in a global context. She explores the history of capitalism and globalization from the perspective of art, artists and museums. She studies the economic knowledge and instruments mobilized by artists in their works, writings and market practices. She is also interested in how economists make use of images, objects and exhibition spaces. Her first book, *The Artist as Economist. Art and Capitalism in the 1960s* (Yale University Press, 2019) considers how money, finance, and economics in general became a focus for artistic experimentation in the 1960s. In 2022, she published an anthology of artists' writing about the economy since the 19th century (B42, 2022). She recently completed a new book manuscript provisionally entitled *The capitalist eye. From commercial to colonial museums.*



2012-2013

2012-2013

The workshop “Securities of art. On the history of authentication between work, text and context” will examine artistically conceived authentications that have become constitutive for the status and value of artworks since the early 18th century. The guiding assumption is that artists in particular interrogate specific methods of authentication – such as signatures and titles, but also certificates, contracts and other securities in the broadest sense – and integrate them into the structure of their works. Examples range from specially designed subscription tickets for the purchase of prints in the early 18th century to NFTs and contracts in works of contemporary art. The key focus is on exploring an art history of authentication in overarching social, economic and legal-historical contexts on the one hand, and on the other, delineating the theoretical contours of the relationship between the authenticating and the authenticated, between work and parergon, and between text, paratext, and context. We will engage in a historical and theoretical analysis of the shift from the authentication *of* art to authentication *as* art.

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