

Making Waves 3

research workshop

BEYOND POLITICS? AESTHETICS & SOCIETY

Table 5 ECONOMICS & AESTHETICS

Short impression of the table conversation by Maartje van der Meule.

During Making Waves 3 on March 14, the table discussion led by Erwin Dekker, professor in Cultural Economics at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, mainly focused on the intersection of art and culture with economics and the market. The discussion started with a quick round of remarks on the keynote speech of Pascal Gielen, but already quickly moved to the main questions that were discussed during this workshop: how do aesthetics and the market influence each other? Is keeping aesthetics away from the market better for aesthetics? And how is creativity visible in current economics? According to Dekker, markets have changed on both the consumption and the production side. In order to see where the creativity is, we have to look at already existing places to see if these are changing into a more creative environment. Do people get to be more creative on the job? Are office spaces more open for example? We can see a change in the market in the sense that big companies start to become more flexible and want their employees to engage in creativity. But as a counterargument, the participants of the table conversation asked if the market is not just adjusting to the demand of the consumers in order to profit from it themselves.

On the other side, we could ask the question if we are changing the way people consume. Instead of focusing on static things like politics etc. we have to look at the markets and at what people now do on these markets to see if this is changing. Dekker thinks it is changing and as an example, he brings up the fact that people are nowadays more and more involved with home cooking and different ways of dealing with food than a couple of years ago. These are not only changes in niche markets but changes in the big company supermarkets as well. But does this change in consumerism change creativity? Or is it changed by creativity? These questions brought up the question whether we are still talking about creativity or not, and what creativity exactly is. And are we not again back at the point that big companies only follow the demand of the consumers in order to gain money out of it, instead of really engaging in creativity themselves?

The discussion between the participants mainly circled around these arguments; the market only follows society for their own profit and the opposite idea that we as consumers create changes in the market. A lot of interesting ideas were shared during the workshop and it gave room for thought on topics linked to the discussion, for example, how cultures and subcultures organize themselves on the market.