



Beyond Compensated

Art offered them a different way of living, one that they believed more than compensated for the loss of comfort and respectability -Virginia Nicholson

People spend a monumental amount of time and energy trying to discern *motivation* and *incentives*. *Why did this person do this, what will make this person do this, why am I always doing that etc.* The two most common ones are fairly transparent: sex and money. More specifically: *how can I get more sex and money*. The lengths people go to in order to answer this question are astounding, they shape the entire world. Think about it, you, just a single person- what's the last thing you did in order to either have sex or make money? How far out of your way did you go to do it? What's the furthest you've ever gone out of your way for either (or, in some sorrow-filled cases, both at once). Even things that seem mundane are actually quite crazy. Dressing nice, cutting your finger nails, brushing your teeth... an enormous majority of our daily lives revolve around things that will make us a more appealing choice to prospective mates¹. But some people, especially artists, are driven by a need to create. Sometimes even, this need blocks out huge swaths of hard-wired human needs and desires. Why? *Beyond Compensated* is a quirky, Asian-infused visual ode to the curious drives of men. The lengths that people go to in order to get what they want, subtle or outright.

Let's try a creative exercise to illustrate the point. Think of a verb. *I will wait*. Now try coming up with some hypothetical situation where someone would have to do that in order to have sex or make money. It was easy right? Ok, perhaps the point is proven. These two driving factors loom so heavily on most people's actions that many can hardly contemplate the existence of individuals to whom neither is a driving force. Groups like asexuals, communists and hippies perplex many of us. But another enormous population exists that is also quite counter to these motivating factors (not that they are all mutually exclusive of course): artists. For many artists, the only motivating factor is some driving force beyond the means of articulation. Some burning that supersedes sex and money, and sometimes even creeps into supersession of the physiological needs. There are countless stories of artists starving or sleeping in unheated apartments because they used the money for paint¹.

The general populations' spending of absorbent amounts of energy on sex and money has had a number of off-shoot effects. Much like the space race gave us a bundle of new technologies, or the arms races of World Wars I and II expanded the bounds of what societies were capable of... so too has the quest of trying to have sex and make money molded most of the world. The entirety of history is replete with the over-indulgences of kings, queens and lords. Rumors of Catherine the Great having sex with horses², or Henry

¹ Although the claim is cliché, the list is quite long and includes James Barry, Van Gogh, Jean-Honore Fragonard, Gustave C. Langenberg, El Greco, and Amedeo Modigliani who died broke at 35 in 1920 but recently had a piece sold at auction for \$170 million.

² Sadly this rumor is almost certainly not true. It is well documented that she died in bed of illness, and there is no evidence to support the claim that she died during horse sex...or that she ever partook in that.

VIII beheading any wives he got bored with³. People in power are the obvious examples of what a person might choose to do when they have their unlimited, and unrestrained druthers. Much more interesting though is those that don't: *the drutherless*. These are the people who have to fight and squirm and get savvy, lest they stay broke and alone for the sorry sexless span of their lives.

If we boil everything down to its simplest reduction and explanation we can probably just say that human desire for sex has been, and will continue to be, one of the most significant factors that shapes our world. Plenty of people have argued just that, including Camille Paglia, famed author of *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. This bestseller argued, essentially, that the entirety of western civilization was a result of the clashes between the binary existence of masculine, phallic forces, and feminine, chthonic ones. It did so famously by examining dozens of famous novels, plays, artworks etc. In her view, institutions like marriage and religion are man-made structures to exercise control and influence over women². Money is a large motivator but often only insofar as it is able to facilitate the opportunity for sex. But is there some higher ideal than sex? Some real or imagined, conscious or unconscious need that sits on a plateau high above it?

Man's needs aren't as frantic and random as is sometimes posited, there's a rather clearly defined hierarchy of them actually that most people agree upon. This hierarchy jostles a bit from person to person, and its features and structure are disputed heavily, but we can suppose it's real enough. I mean we need to breathe, eat, drink and sleep, so let's start with that. Even if you are well fed and have an excellent night of sleep, it's not as though you'll then be perfectly content waking up to sit and do nothing all day. We're hardwired to ensure security of all our physiological needs and then move on to the more trivial things. In his 1954 book *Motivation and Personality*³, Abraham Maslow laid this out in his framework for man's hierarchy of needs, a template still very much used in the academic spectrum of today's psychology, and sociology communities. Professor Steven Reiss expanded on these needs 45 years later when he published *Who Am I? The 16 Basic Desires That Motivate Our Action and Define Our Personalities*. What are those 16 basic desires? According to Reiss: "...power, independence, curiosity, acceptance, order, saving, honor, idealism, social contact, family, status, vengeance, romance, eating, physical exercise, and tranquility."

Arguments for a nuanced plethora of subtle motivating factors are fair enough, but most of these (*also* arguably) exist today to aid a person in their pursuit of money and sex. The only obvious thing that sits atop most of the general motivating factors: *happiness*, perhaps more aptly explained today as *dopamine*. Dopamine has fast become a word on the tip of everyone's tongue. This naturally occurring chemical inside the brain, once thought to be rather insignificant, has proven to be so important that its imbalance can alter the fundamental operation of the brain, it has even been linked to schizophrenia and psychosis⁴. Every hit of dopamine encourages the action that precipitated it, a simple

³ This one is actually true. He beheaded two. Most school children in England are familiar with the rhyme about his wives that goes: "Divorced, Beheaded, Died: Divorced, Beheaded, Survived"

enough explanation for most addictive behavior and dependency issues. What makes these issues so much more prevalent now than throughout the rest of prior history? There are certainly more sources around to provide you with dopamine hits today (especially synthetic ones), and those sources are available much more easily than ever. One major difference today is perhaps that, more than any other time in history, many people feel entitled to happiness. An entitlement that leads their pursuit of it to occasionally turn ruthless.

The question of what motivates humans has become increasingly important as societies have grown larger and become more complicated. *Those trivial things* don't seem so trivial anymore. People have always been ruthless in their pursuit of material gains... but of happiness? Is there a difference really? Just as an example, take year 1305 in which the Cappella degli Scrovegni was completed by Giotto. *Entitlement to general happiness* wasn't really a thing. At least not a thing widely discussed outside of a few publications, philosophical musings and religious scripts⁵. The typical human being during that time was infinitely more focused on ensuring basic survival as the world was a couple of decades away from the beginning of both the Hundred Year War and the Bubonic plague⁶. As free choice eventually swept through most parts of the world, it brought with it the terrible angst-ridden obligation of decision-making⁴. Figuring out how to manipulate a free thinking populace of course would eventually become the impetus for corporations and businesses, ironically taking hold as *their* primary motivating factor. As its value rose, motivating workers became an enormous challenge that faced 19th and 20th century thinkers⁵. But people had to *buy* all these new things that the workers were making, so naturally this was the time when advertising was brought to its modern form.

These are all sweeping (and easily disputable) generalities of course, it's quite likely you have been wondering to yourself: *what does any of this have to do with art?* Well, what motivates people to make art? Also money and sex? That's really going to depend on who you ask. There are a multitude of nuanced answers and explanations for what are (and ought to be) the motivating factors for an artist. Author Steven Pressfield wrote that "The best and only thing that one artist can do for another is to serve as an example and an inspiration". Many people have their own idea of what *the artist* is today, and it's quite possible that they are all right in their own way. A large amount of the clichés exist perpetuate the artist's image as a *spotlight whore* and *charlatan-esque* fortune seeker. Just as many clichés exist that depict them as money-despising, *I'd rather die broke than be a sell-out* types. The reality is that if one person makes something they want to make, regardless of their concerns about how it will be perceived, it is more likely to be something special. Following formulas is, well... formulaic, predictable, boring. A thick grey sludge of

⁴ In his 2004 book *The Paradox of Choice*, Barry Schwartz suggests that in the face of numerous options, people tend to evaluate their situation in terms of missed opportunities instead of the opportunity's potential, often leading to a perpetual state of dissatisfaction.

⁵ A perfect example of this is Frederick Taylor's theory of Scientific Management, in many ways a corporate guide to optimal conditions that would both motivate and stimulate a working person to achieve the greatest results from that individual.

bland and democratically chosen themes and ideas. A pop-song made using a pop-song formula would likely be a huge success, but almost in every case... it would also very likely be terrible.

So how do art fairs play into all of this? Today, probably more than at anytime in history, art is an industry... a *business*. Gallerists, art directors, curators and collectors all know well just how high the numbers involved are. As an example, the European Fine Art Foundation calculated that the sale of art and antiques during the year 2014 was \$51.4 billion dollars⁷. A number like that is hard to ignore. Even for the ardent idealists among artists, it is impossible to make art and display it in an event where the booth-fee alone is the price of a brand new Toyota Camery⁸ and not at least consider the financial viability of what you're doing. As Boris Groys writes in his article *Art and Money*, "Public exhibition practice thus becomes a place where interesting and relevant questions concerning the relationship between art and money emerge. The art market is—at least formally—a sphere dominated by private taste." It's these private tastes that an artist is often asked to ignore at the very high cost, potentially, of his or her livelihood. But pure art, *great* art does just that. Great art exists on its own plane for its own sake. It is made for a multitude of different and admirable purposes, but if one of those is money, sex or material gain, it is often glaringly obvious and considered as such. As Picasso famously said "Success is dangerous. One begins to copy oneself, and to copy oneself is more dangerous than to copy others. It leads to sterility." It is perhaps in this way that the need to please others can become the very undoing of whatever uniqueness originally pleased.

Beyond Compensated is a visual ode to the nuance and beauty of human motivation. "To and Fro Some Forever Ago" depicts a couple dressed in traditional Chinese army uniforms playfully swaying back and forth on a swing. The underlying idea is how important personal relationships are, even against a backdrop of much larger forces at work. A person's passion will almost always drive their actions. "Add Your Lazy Layer" is almost a follow up to that idea. It's about dealing with the past, the things you loved and left your mark on, as well as the things that left their mark on you. It's fun to speculate about all the reasons people act the way they do. The pursuit of impulse and passion takes all forms, as does the impulse itself. Most notably and curiously though, it is the impulse to make and display artwork that deserves a closer look. There's a balance to be found everywhere we look, but is there one in art? We gawk at those who spiral out of control just as much as those too nervous to try anything. All the artworks you'll see in this exhibition are depicting and expressing that flux in some way. They show a balancing act that is working wonderfully, or otherwise in some stage of disaster and impending doom... it can be hard to tell the difference sometimes.

Additional sources:

http://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_on_the_paradox_of_choice

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_Taylor.htm

<http://faculty.psy.ohio-state.edu/reiss/>

<http://www.analytictech.com/mb021/motivation.htm>

http://www.lib.okayama-u.ac.jp/www/acta/pdf/62_3_141.pdf

http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stan_Floresco/publication/266085689_The_Nucleus_Accumbens_An_Interface_Between_Cognition_Emotion_and_Action/links/55325a820cf27acb0deb1423.pdf



<http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/bul-1316803.pdf>
<http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/catherinethegreat/a/histmyths1.htm>
<http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Henry-VIII/>

-
- ¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1764845/>
 - ² <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/reviews.asp?isbn=9780300043969>
 - ³ <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>
 - ⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2669582/>
 - ⁵ <https://hbr.org/2012/01/the-history-of-happiness>
 - ⁶ <http://www.historycentral.com/dates/1300ad.html>
 - ⁷ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-11/global-art-sales-reach-record-51-billion-euros-driven-by-u-s->
 - ⁸ <https://www.truecar.com/prices-new/toyota/camry-pricing/>

Dates: From December 1st to December 6th, 2015

Curation: Ryan Nimmo

Art Direction: Thomas Charvériat

Research: Juan Gómez, Jackson McHugh, Leven Smith

Artistic Research: Jin Yun 金云, Tang Dashi 汤大师 & He Dashi 贺大师

Coordination: Yeung Sin Ching, Christopher Charvériat, Alexandre Turzi, & Adam Hseih 谢昕

Venue: SCOPE Miami beach pavilion, Booth G11

Artist: island6 Arts Collective

Link: http://www.island6.org/ScopeMiami2015_info.html