

I'd prefer not to

So what do we have here? A flyer that reads: "Lent for Promotional Use Only, Sale or Unauthorized Transfer is Prohibited and Void. Subject to Return Upon Demand by Owner. Acceptance of This Card Constitutes Agreement to the Above." First of all it's funny. It's funny to transfer the logic and rhetoric of a promo 12" to an art flyer. These objects that are printed up in, I'm guessing, 500 copies, and sent out to members, supporters and others who have somehow gotten themselves on the institution's mailing list. And it's important that it's a mailing list for an actual physical flyer, it's quaint, it's something that until recently I would have thought was bound to disappear within five years, at most. Since e-flux, an email list that allows galleries and institutions to pay for access to tens of thousands subscribers, this kind of virtual invitation and project description has become the main medium for telling the world that you've made some art. The flyer by contrast is provisional and provincial. It reaches practically no one, and those it does reach are usually peripheral to any relevant power structure. The American writer Kenneth Goldsmith has said that today if something isn't on the Internet, it doesn't exist. In some parts of the art world we could say that if an event was not advertised on e-flux it never happened.

Like anything on old media, such as printed matter, flyers disappear, *physically* not just in an abstract sea of information. I know people with large collections of flyers from raves in Oslo in the early 1990s. Normally this is related to what writer Dave Tompkins has called a kind of "research-obsessive, collector-obsessive"¹ mentality that often comes with being in a situation where your interests are completely on the side of what those around you are interested in. This also fuels a kind of conspiratorial mindset where you don't really ever trust anyone else, or at least no one from outside your own circle. This might explain the urge, absurd as it may seem, to deep down wish that you could actually request that the flyers to your show are returned to you. It's about controlling whatever legacy what you do might possibly ever have. There is a danger in how the infinite reproducibility of the Internet works- nothing can be recalled but this loss of control, in artistic terms, is seen by most as a good thing, as a way of giving up authority. As soon as something's digital and out there, anyone has access. Democracy, right? There is an undeniable feeling of freedom, I imagine, in the very idea that you might get this information back, to make sure there's nothing out there, nothing to tag.

But really what this flyer does more than anything is to question what constitutes "the work" and what is simply the physical trace that something has taken place. A lot of art now mostly exists on CV's, or in portfolios, where it continues to reach people, at least the kind of people who read artist CV's or look at portfolios, and create opportunities for future exhibitions. This is a legacy of 1970s art like performance and land art, but is particularly true today when it comes to exhibitions in less prestigious exhibition spaces, because really, who cares if anyone saw the show as long as the documentation looks great?

¹ Powell, Mike "Mega Q&A: Author Dave Tompkins on His New Book: *How To Wreck a Nice Beach: The Vocoder from World War II to Hip Hop*, http://blogs.villagevoice.com/music/archives/2010/03/mega_qa_author.php

This is key when it comes to artists like Sex Tags whose total production is so vast and maze-like, and more importantly, so far removed from the activities that conventionally signify "value" and "quality" within the economy of the current art world: you know, exhibitions and that sort of thing. Sex Tags operate almost completely from within another universe of signification, one where it's not about who's supported your show, what gallery you show with or which residencies you've been to. The value structure, however, is pretty much the same, it's just that the participants are different. Substitute Intergroove for OCA, Hard Wax for Erik Steen and Robert Johnson for Bethanien and you've pretty much got it down. In any case, what is conventionally understood to be the product is simply a promotion of the event. Similar to something Brian Eno once said, something to the effect that his records are simply to be understood as a way of promoting his ideas.

Sex Tags also always deal with this kind confrontational nostalgia, forcing attention towards the art world paraphernalia that we normally don't pay much attention to, investing the purely functional sources of information with sufficient independent content to make them the most important things in the room. That's the case with this flyer, and in a sense the flyer *is* the work. That's why it's so important that you might have to give it back. It shows an entirely other sensibility, one where the art isn't for a spectatorship who wants to keep the flyer to add it to their own accumulation of cultural capital. "Yeah, I saw that Sex Tags show in Skien." Its significance, however, is to be discovered later, beyond whatever happens during the period in which it's available to us. This is their show, not ours.

13.42. - Erlend Hammer, Strausberger platz, September 4th, 2010,