



## Rules of the Game: a Series of Talks

This presentation is not a transcript of the event, but the curator's summary of it. (Transcript & ppt slides for Jeni Walwin's talk is available separately)

# Opening comments

Why a series of talks on the economy? It is an important because in a capitalist society price is the dominating definer of value.

But is price really value? We know it's not, though we would want it to be.

Price versus value is charged for art, which is what we will explore in this Series 1.



# Opening comments



For one, in art we can argue there are other metrics to considered, if not use, instead of price, and Jeni Walwin will discuss this in her talk.

However, going back to price, maybe (playing devil's advocate), this question can be removed altogether if there was one price-maker for art, much like OPEC sets the price for oil and Tesco's the price of bananas (here in the UK), and perhaps Alana Jelinek will agree or disagree with this in her talk?

# Performance artist: Alana Jelinek

## “Why the market is great for art”

**Alana Jelinek**, in the personae of a public relations guru for the fictional mega-conglomerate BLACCXN, explains why the market, and thus price, is the best indicator of value for art.



Alana Jelinek in performance at AUGUST art

Note: recordings of past BLACCXN PR guru #6 performance available on the following sites:

<http://www.alanajelinek.com>   <http://www.blaccxn.com>   [www.youtube.com/watch?v=86bQLgsr8fQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86bQLgsr8fQ)

A novel *Ohm's Law*, set in BLACCXN's future, is available through the artist

# What is BLACCXN?

*(Alana performing as) PR Guru #6 for BLACCXN.*

What is BLACCXN? It is a meta-conglomerate consisting of pharmaceuticals, agricultural innovations, and “local retail outlets that consolidate our brand”

In Pharmaceuticals, BLACCXN is at the cutting edge, so you never need to feel anxious, grow old, or die

Similarly, BLACCXN Agriculture produces seeds that grow anywhere at anytime

Our Local retail stores source any special local delicacy and mass produce it for you globally

## Why the market is great for art

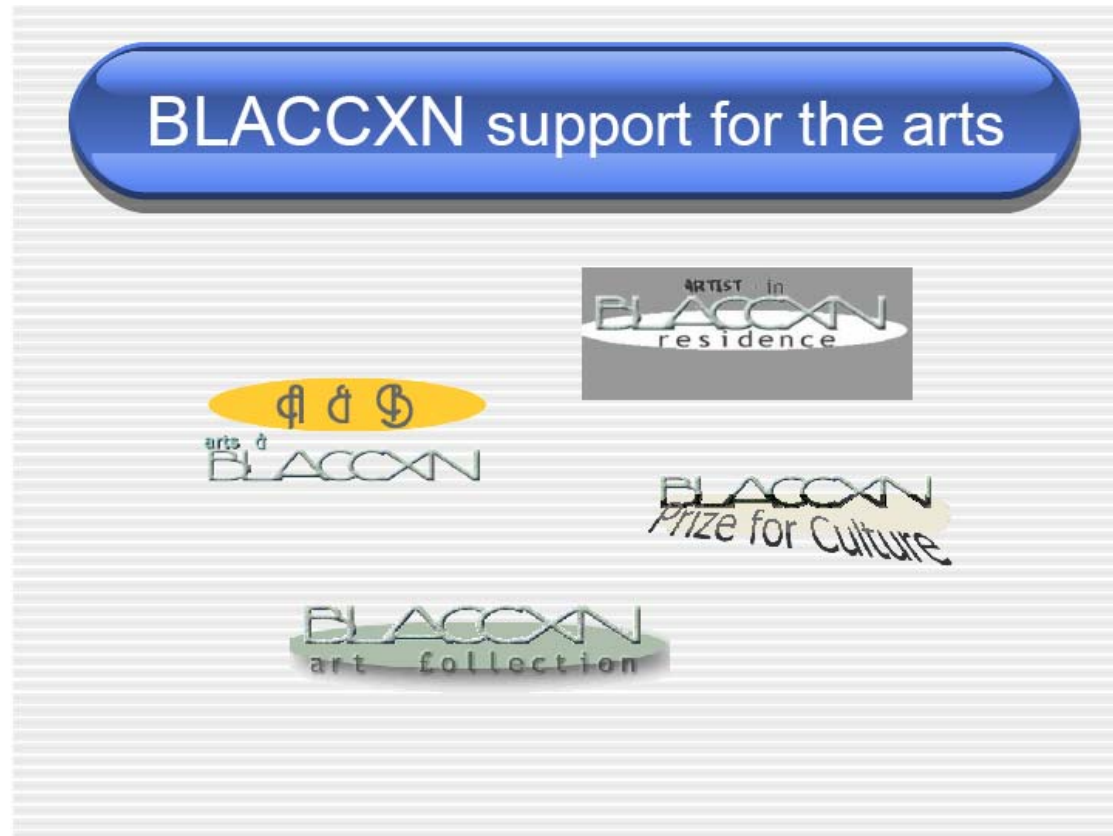
- BLACCXN
  - Pharma
  - Agra
  - Local



BLACCXN caters for your every need, desire and fear

# BLACCXN supports the arts

BLACCXN offers a prize for culture, putting a financial value on culture.



BLACCXN has one of the finest modern and contemporary art collections in the world

# The market is meritocratic, including for art

Artist	HP (USD)	Auction House	Year
Damien Hirst	1,237,600	Sotheby's	2004
Tracey Emin	108,250	Christie's	2001
Sarah Lucas	135,750	Christie's	2001
Bruce Nauman	9,906,000	Christie's	1997
Eva Hesse	2,202,500	Christie's	1997
Jackson Pollock	11,655,500	Christie's	2003
Lee Krasner	1,911,500	Christie's	2003
Henry Moore	8,408,000	Sotheby's	2004
Barbara Hepworth	1,228,000	Sotheby's	2004

The market is meritocratic, the best is rewarded. It tells us what is good.

In the table, we can see Damien Hirst's work sold for \$1,237,600. Whereas Tracey Emin's and Sarah Lucas' works didn't even fetch 10% of that. This is because their work is not even 10% as good as Hirst's.

Eva Hesse's work compared to Bruce Nauman's is only 22% as good.

In fact, in general, women's work is only +/- 10% as good as men's work.

# The market is meritocratic

Artist Art Price 2007	Dates	nationality	Turnover 2007 S
Warhol	1928-87	US	422,250,350
Picasso	1881-1973	French	319,697,003
Bacon	1909-1992	Irish/UK	244,538,868
Rothko	1903-1970	US	206,690,290
Monet	1840-1926	French	164,928,461
Matisse	1869-1954	French	114,186,184
Basquiat	1960-1988	US	101,507,800
Leger	1881-1955	French	92,283,376
Chagall	1887-1985	French	88,614,044
Cezanne	1839-1906	French	86,582,638

In 2007, the most valuable art came from USA, France, UK – see the table above.

But in 2008, looking at the table to the right, we can see artists from China catching up, proving they are finally making valuable art.

Artist 2008	nationality	Turnover in Euros
Jeff Koons. 1955	US	81,320,082
J.M Basquiat. 1960-1988	US	63,678,955
Damien Hirst. 1965	UK	53,618,722
Richard Prince 1949	US	38,779,852
Zhang Xiaogang 1958	CN	38,596,196
Zeng Fanzhi 1964	CN	33,247,544
Yue Minjun 1962	CN	33,189,462
Takashi Murakami 1962	Japan	18,551,301
Wang Guangyi 1957	CN	14,018,995
Liu Xiaodong 1963	CN	13,073,121
Cai Guoqiang 1957	CN	12,098,050
Yan Pei-ming 1960	CN	11,903,476
Chen Yifei 1946-2005	CN	11,597,274
Fang Lijun 1963	CN	11,469,122
Liu Ye	CN	10,599,527

Furthermore, these values come from a rich elite whose taste we can trust to trickle down to the rest of us as “trickle down aesthetics”



# In conclusion

## Why the market is great for art

- Without the market there is no value to art
- There is no such thing as the public sector (There is no place outside the market)
- A bright future for the market:
  - Endless growth
  - Any good artist can be a part



# Independent curator: Jeni Walwin

## **“The value of art for non-art contexts”**

**Jeni Walwin** presented, through 5 case studies, the value to her clients of having contemporary art work in their environment.

The case clients include:

- Pictet & Cie (a private bank)
- Bracknell & Wokingham College
- WOMAD festival (a music festival)
- Cicely Saunders Institute  
(an institute for palliative care)
- Battle Library, Reading, Berkshire  
(a public library)



Jeni Walwin at AUGUST art

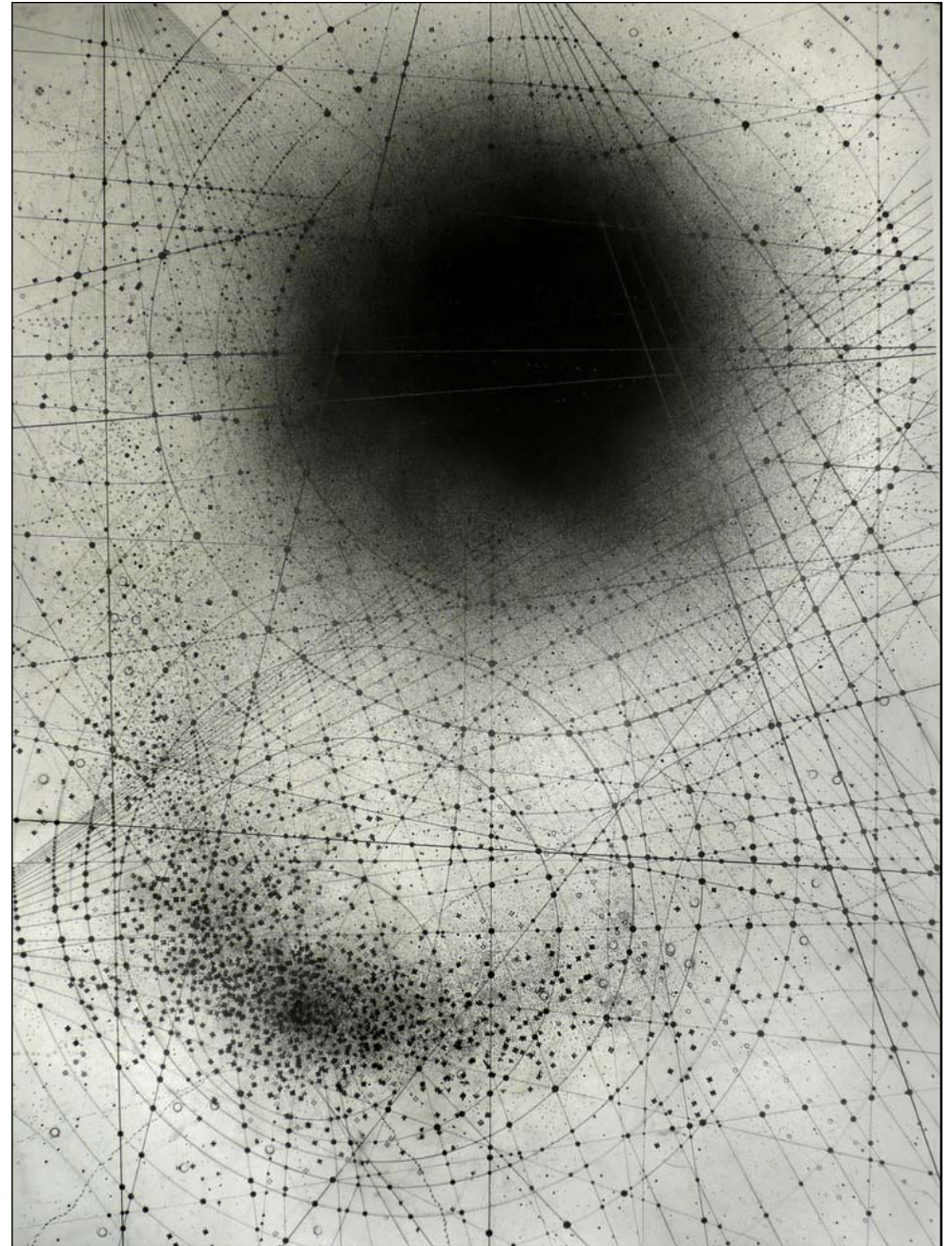
# Pictet & Cie

Pictet & Cie is a Swiss private bank.

They wanted to start an art collection for their London office, a Norman Foster building full of light.

They did not have a “brief” or “focus” as such, and it was decided the collection would be based around the concept of “landscape” in its widest definition, with works that are more graphic.

Emma McNally, S21, graphite on paper, 2010



(c) copyright AUGUST art, 2011



# Employee response

Even from the small selection of works shown here, the art works are assertive, and some are large in scale; they do not hover politely in the background.

Which begs the question do the employees like the works, collected for their sake?

While some works gathered neither strong opinions one way or another. Others were not well-liked.

Interestingly, these “least” liked were ranked by other employees as their “favourite”.

Paul McDevitt, *Cuthbert of Lindisfarne*, from the Scarehouse series, colour pencil and ink on paper, 2007



# Story telling



Simon Faithful, digital drawing, laser-etched perspex light box, from the Antarctic series, 2005

One thing Jeni did to help staff build a relationship with their collection was to affix a small wall label next to work. The label was brief listing the artist and providing a short explanation of the intention/context of the work.

Staff said they found the labels helpful, and some followed up and google the artist.

The labels were about “story telling”. It helped to explain the work to people who did not choose to have the work in their environment.

# Cicely Saunders Institute

To first explain the background to Cicely Saunders Institute: Dame Saunders set up the first hospice (care home for the terminally ill) in the UK.

The Institute, named after her, is a research centre for palliative care, and the client wanted contemporary art for their new building.

One of the commissions is “Birch” by Tania Kovats (installed shot to the right). The installation of birch trees rises the full height of the 4-storey atrium.



Tania Kovats, *Birch*, paint and jesamite, 2010

The work also had an audio component, the sound of blackbirds, played only at dawn and dusk.



## “Birch”

The trees are castings, and intricately detailed and painted (detail shown in the image on the right).

This attention to detail is one reason why the Institute found the work fitting.

For a patient in a hospice, time becomes about the minute, whether in reflection of memories, and or contemplation of time remaining.

The staff felt that the art work reflected what their work was about.



# Curator's conclusion

In order to draw one conclusion I shall focus on one (of many) ideas, "story telling". Art tells a story, and viewers connect with the work through that story. The ability of art to tell a story, and one we care about, may serve as one of the ephemeral metrics to measure value. This means it would be unique to each viewer.

But, as with any story, there is what the story teller tells and what the listener hears.

For the Cicely Saunders Institute, the story that "Birch" told appears to be what the staff heard, and what they also wanted to hear. Perhaps buying the work was buying their voice.

BLACCXN is a made-up company but its real world equivalents may collect art and may be doing so as another form of empire building. The arts' "stories" may not be the same as this collector's.

Whose stories should matter, I asked the speakers? All of them, Jeni says.

I puzzle over this by reflecting on one of the principles of a capitalist society, it is that the quality of the "story" should not affect who buys something (illegality notwithstanding). If something is for sale, it goes to the buyer willing and able to pay the highest price. This could either be a Cicely Saunders Institute or a BLAXXCXN.

This means that price does matter, in terms of who owns it, but not in determining art's value. That value is the art's inherent story, and the freedom for the artist to tell it, viewers to respond to it, and buyers to buy it.



# Jeni Walwin biography

**Jeni Walwin** is an independent curator, writer and public art consultant. She is currently working on a number of commissions for artists within regeneration, festivals and local authority contexts. She is the project director of the public art programme *Artists in the City* and for many years has worked on a project basis for the Contemporary Art Society, most notably as the lead curator for the annual ARTfutures show,. With Graham Devlin she devised a contemporary art strategy for British Waterways, and for WOMAD festival 2010 she curated *Moving Portraits: Artists' Films – People and Place*. With the artist Henry Krokatsis she conceived and selected the exhibition *You'll Never Know: Drawing and Random Interference* for the Hayward Gallery's National Touring Programme. Her writings have appeared in books and magazines, and for Intellect Books she edited *Searching for Art's New Publics*, exploring ways in which artists embrace people as an integral element of their work. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the Drawing Room and is a trustee of the performance theatre company Crying Out Loud.

# Alana Jelinek biography

**Alana Jelinek's** BLACCXN project is ongoing from 2004, and has been performed at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Tate Britain, Tate Modern, and other institutions, as well as at guerrilla happenings ... The project arises from her PhD at Oxford Brookes, *art as a democratic act: the interplay of content and context*. Some of her other recent projects include "the field" an experimental collaborative project investigating art and science located in a field near Stansted airport with Terra Incognita arts organisation, and "Tall Stories and Cannibal Forks" a research and exhibition at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. Upcoming is *This is not art*, published by I.B. Tauris 2011

## Series 2: Rules of the Game: Value & Money - on Money

Friday, 13 May, 6 – 8 pm

- Stefano DeCesaris, "Money: do we understand it?"
- Winnie Sze, "Can art be money?" (note: revised topic from original press release)

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