Ruins suggest temporality; they function as memento mori. They also suggest something that has “taken place,” occupying space and time. Ruins remain, or are unearthed, bearing witness to history as failure.

The Museum and the Market

1. SACRED GOODS | In no society is everything for sale. All societies exclude some goods from commodification, either by law or through shared moral values. Electoral votes cannot be bought or sold, at least not legally; neither can a verdict in court. The same is true of a nation’s cultural heritage. Iconic works of art in museum collections, for instance, are often legally protected. Michelangelo’s Pietà in Rome’s St. Peter’s Basilica, Picasso’s Guernica in Madrid’s Reina Sofia, Rembrandt’s Night Watch in Amsterdam’s Rijksmuseum—these can never be bought or sold.

2. SACRED GOODS | But while widespread marketization is real, especially in societies where the government is retrenching, long-term trends reveal that the opposite is also true. In the West, the slave trade was outlawed in the nineteenth century, and so on.

3. SACRED GOODS | Insofar as we deem some things too sacred to be assigned a monetary value, the Meta-Monumental Garage Sale might be a provocation. Among the items Martha Rosler has sold in the past, many are considered too

OLAV VELTHUIS

Photographic Illustration by Kelli Anderson (and Friends)
Artists and Art Dealers

French artist Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), best known for his novel Madame Bovary, wrote:

"For what is the end of life, if not to secure what we value? The end of all things is not death, but the loss of what we love."

Flaubert’s words resonate with the themes of the contemporary artwork by Martha Rosler. Her iconic piece, a Garbage Sale, which began in 1973, is a critical commentary on consumerism and the commercialization of art. The piece was first staged in a New York City public space, where Rosler sold discarded items at a price that reflected their market value, creating aギャザージャルしるがすの価値を反映した市場価格で売却した作品。The artwork challenged the traditional perception of art as an exclusive commodity accessible only to the wealthy, highlighting the irony of a sale featuring artworks that were once considered worthless and now commanded significant prices.

In the world of contemporary art, the juxtaposition of high-value artworks with everyday objects from a garbage sale created a thought-provoking narrative. Rosler’s artwork forced viewers to consider the social and economic implications of value, challenging the traditional boundaries between art and everyday life. The Garbage Sale exposed the arbitrariness of artistic value, as items that were once discarded and considered insignificant acquired a new, unexpected worth in the realm of art.

Art Dealers and Resale

According to art dealer Nancy Sperling and art historian Helen Molesworth, artworks that remain unsold or unsold at auction often find their way back into the market through various mechanisms. These artworks may re-surface in the hands of collectors who initially purchased them at a high price, or they may be acquired by new collectors who consider the artwork to have a financial value that exceeds its initial purchase price. The market for contemporary art is constantly evolving, and artworks that were once considered marginal or unconventional can gain new recognition and value as the art world becomes more inclusive.

Resale of Artworks

In the realm of contemporary art, the concept of resale is not as straightforward as it is in traditional fine art. Resale rights, which allow artists to reclaim a portion of the resale proceeds, are more prevalent in the fine art market compared to the contemporary art market. However, as the market for contemporary art has grown, so too have the opportunities for resale. This has led to disputes between artists and dealers over the division of proceeds, as the value of artworks can fluctuate dramatically in the secondary market.

Conclusion

The contemporary art market is a complex and ever-evolving landscape. Artsy, an online platform for contemporary art, has observed the importance of secondary markets for contemporary art. Secondary markets allow artworks that were once considered unsold or under-valued to enter the market and potentially acquire new financial value. The Garbage Sale by Martha Rosler serves as a reminder of the dynamic nature of value in the art world, where the boundaries between art and everyday life are fluid and constantly changing.