

THE ART SHOW

As the act of curation surpasses the act of artistic production by becoming not only the dominant method of disseminating artistic work but also by claiming to be an artistic act in itself the importance of the work of art is diminished. When presented with an art exhibition, or show, the exhibition itself increasingly claims to be the important work and the actual works of art contained within it have become almost irrelevant.

This apparent defeat provides an artist with a new way of producing art work: the show. No longer merely a display or performance of art work the show provides a new medium for the artist to exploit using what now appears to be a moribund method of disseminating art work to create new work. The show is the art object; in it the artist neither performs the work nor assumes the role of curator but produces an art object in the form of an art show. As the show is produced by an artist the ambiguous nature of the art status of a show produced by a curator is resolved. The art show is a work of art.

The art show presents itself without obvious work. The show concept is formed and decided and the work is selected for inclusion. The gallery is planned and prepared, the catalogue and documentation produced. An edition of prints referencing the show is produced for sale. Advertised, opened, reviewed and discussed by the panel in conversation with the artist the show has its own autonomous form with the works providing nothing more than talking points for its apparently curatorial *raison d'être*. Upon closing the catalogue is re-edited for publication with a photographic record of the show and a transcript of the panel discussion. Careers are advanced, drinks are drunk, money changes hands and the public are both interested and unmoved. The show succeeds as an art work having apparently had to do no more than reference the traditional forms of art work, yet by producing an art work in the form of a show rather than ascribing art status to a show of art work the artist reasserts their singular role as the producer of art work.

David W. Speck, London, 2013.